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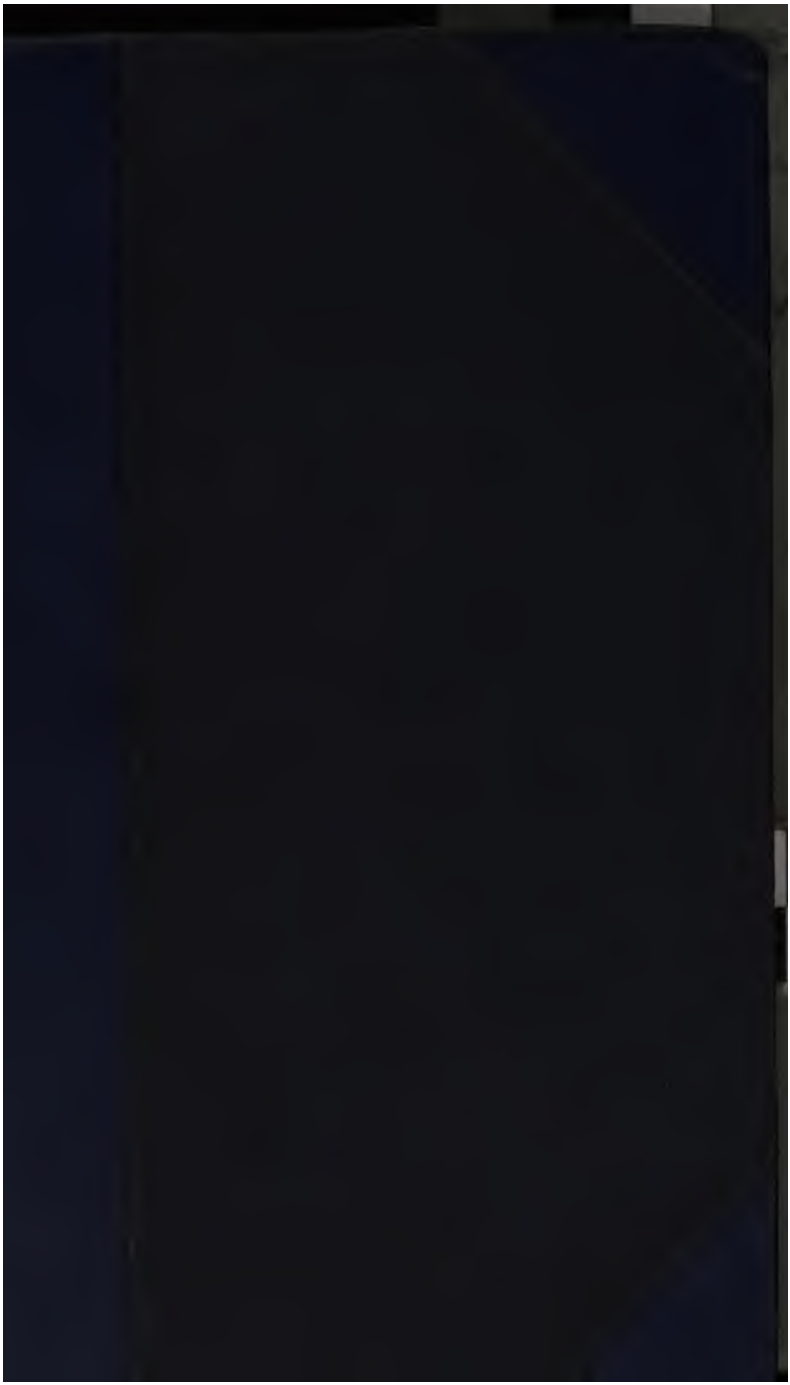

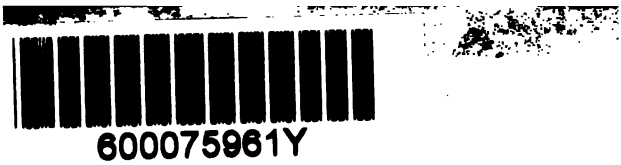
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MONTALVA, &c.

VOL. I.

MONTALVA;

OR

ANNALS OF GUILT.

A TALE.

BY A. HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF THE IRISHMAN IN LONDON.

The image of a wicked, heinous fault
Lives in his eye; that close aspect of his,
Does show the mood of a most troubled breast.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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MONTALVA, &c.

CHAP. I.

"MAY Heaven renounce me when I forget thy generous friendship, dearest D'Rosonio" (cried Montalva, as he pressed the hand of his cousin).

"In truth (replied the count), you owe me no obligation, what I did arose from actual selfishness."

"Selfishness, Fernando! what, at the hazard of your own life to preserve mine? how can you prove that there was any thing selfish in such an act?" said Montalva.

"Very easily (cried the count), had I abandoned you to your fate, I should never have known a tranquil moment; by sharing it, I had at least a chance of preserving you, and my life is not so very precious to me, that I should hesitate to venture it for a friend;" a momentary sadness clouded the ingenuous countenance of D'Rosonio as he spoke, and Montalva surveyed him with an eye of pity.

"Well, Fernando (cried he), we will not argue the point, but from henceforth, we are brothers;" he held out his hand, and D'Rosonio grasped it in his; no protestations confirmed this league of amity, but it lasted during the lives of the friends.

The count D'Rosonio, and the signor Montalva were distantly related, but they had till now been almost strangers to each other; they had indeed often met, but their dispositions were apparently different, and though polite, they were not friendly. Mon-

talva's temper was of the gayest kind, he was a soldier of fortune, and though his sword, and his descent from a long line of illustrious ancestors, was nearly the whole of his inheritance, yet few men were happier. Brave, generous, and unsuspecting, his heart glowed with universal philantrophy, and he lamented the narrowness of his fortune only, when he saw distress which he could not relieve.

Not less noble, or less feeling than his cousin, was the heart of D'Rosonio; but his temper, naturally grave, had been saddened even to melancholy, by a disappointment which he met with in the dawn of his life: he had loved from his boyish days the beautiful Clementina D'Albici, and she returned his passion; few female hearts could indeed be insensible to the merits of D'Rosonio. The father of Clementina was apparently pleased with their mutual attachment; and when D'Rosonio solicited

the hand of his daughter, he refused it only on account of her extreme youth.

"A little time will remove that obstacle, signor (cried the impatient lover), might I but look forward to a certainty of calling the signora Clementina mine, were it even at the end of a whole year, though that would appear an age."

"My daughter is yet a child (said the signor D'Albici, smiling at his warmth), and one year would not render her a woman, neither should I chuse to form any positive engagement for her; but be assured count, that I have the highest sense of the honour you do me in seeking my alliance, and I know not at present, that man to whom I would more willingly intrust the happiness of my child; but I will not enter into any positive engagements."

The decided tone of the signor prevented D'Rosonio's reply; and he endeavoured to persuade himself that at a

proper time he should have the happiness to receive the hand of Clementina from her father; and so in all probability he would, but for an accident that threw Clementina in the way of a richer lover. At a ball given by the countess D'Arfit, she was seen and admired by the Duke D'Vinci. Never till he beheld Clementina had he a thought of marriage; but the graces of her person, the fascinating simplicity of her manners, made an immediate impression upon his heart, and to think of her, except as a wife, he well knew would be vain; yet even with the lovely Clementina, he could not consider matrimony as desirable, and for sometime he wavered; but when he heard that her hand was sought by D'Rosonio, he hesitated no longer; he made his proposals, and they were eagerly accepted by the signor.

The heart of Clementina sunk at the news, and with tears, did she beseech her father not to sacrifice his child; but

ambition was the predominant failing of the signor. The alliance was indeed a splendid one, and he sternly vowed that he would be obeyed. The meek Clementina, who had hitherto been all obedience, now ventured to remonstrate; her father heard her with astonishment.

"What! (exclaimed he,) thinkest thou that my purpose is to be shaken by the folly of an obstinate girl? or that an offer so splendid is to be rejected, merely to humour the caprice of a child, who knows not what she would have? rank, riches, and every earthly happiness await thee as the wife of the duke; and thou wilt enjoy the delightful consciousness of fulfiling a sacred duty, by complying with my will; but shouldst thou refuse, shouldst thou rashly presume to be the arbiter of thy own destiny, mark me; hope not, if thou becomest the partner of D'Rosonio's bed to taste of peace; the curses

of an offended parent shall follow thee."

He ceased, for the unfortunate Clementina sunk senseless at his feet; and it was long before she gave any signs of returning animation; but when she did recover, all opposition to the signor's will was at an end.

"Oh, my father! do not curse your child, I will obey you, indeed I will; but, oh! for Heaven's sake, promise that you will not curse me."

"My child, my Clementina, thou shalt have my blessings; compose thy spirits, and all will be well (said the signor, kissing her cheek); she had been too much agitated to be able to obey him, and he soon left her, as he said, to repose."

But he had strewed the pillow of the unfortunate girl with thorns, and gladly would she have welcomed death, as a refuge from the misery of a forced marriage. The image of D'Rosonio, distracted at her supposed infidelity, pre-

sented itself to her; but her father's curse yet vibrated on her ear, and she dared not suffer her thoughts to dwell upon her lover; yet vainly did she try to recal them, and never till this moment was she sensible how wholly, how intirely her heart was the count's.

The manner in which she received the Duke D'Vinci, would have induced any man of delicacy to withdraw his addresses; but delicacy had no place in the mind of the duke. He saw the coldness, the aversion which she felt for him, but he saw it with indifference; he had always been a favourite with the fair, and he flattered himself, that when Clementina was once his, her sentiments would soon change, or if they did not, it was not of much consequence, her lovely person would be his, and he was incapable of appreciating the value of a heart like Clementina's. He did not therefore betray the smallest symptom of discontent at her behaviour; he begged only that the

marriage might be hastened, and this request was readily agreed to by her father; who wished it over, lest any thing should happen to prevent it.

Immediately on the duke's proposals, signor D'Albici had forbid D'Rosonio his house, and he carefully charged his domestics to bring him every letter that came; he also observed with the greatest attention, that no person but her woman, on whose fidelity he relied implicitly, had access to his daughter; but vigilant as the signor was, yet love triumphed over his caution, and D'Rosonio contrived to convey to his Clementina the following letter:—

"I cannot, I will not believe that it is possible for you to renounce me for ever; your father assures me that every thing is agreed upon, and that you have consented to give your hand to the Duke D'Vinci; but till it is confirmed by your own lips, I will *not* believe it.

"Clementina, I cannot for a moment

support the thought of your perfidy. You, in whom I had treasured up every hope of future happiness, for whom I would with transport have shed my heart's best blood, you who have always seemed so generous, so nobly disinterested, surely you can never sacrifice yourself, a willing victim at the cursed shrine of ambition.

"I am convinced I must have been imposed upon, I am certain that your heart is still unchanged. Clementina, my angel, forgive me, for doubting your fidelity, even for a moment; write to me, I beseech you, send me but a single line, say only, 'my heart is yours,' and the universe combined, shall not tear you from

"D'Rosonio."

This incoherent, but faithful picture of a disordered mind, increased the anguish of Clementina; and for some time she hesitated about answering it. "Ah! (said she, mentally), let him think me perfidious, he will then be speedily re-

stored to peace, he will remember me only as an ambitious, inconstant woman, and such a being he cannot regret." At this thought her tears flowed with added bitterness, and the romantic generosity which dictated her resolution, gave way to the desire of being justified in the eyes of her lover.

"I must write to him (thought she), I must return the precious token which I have so long worn next my heart."

She took it from her neck, and bitter indeed were the tears which she shed upon it, as she pressed it for the last time to her lips. It was a beautiful trinket, in the form of a heart, which her father had suffered her to accept from D'Rosonio, but the signor knew not, when he did so, that it contained the portrait of the count; a secret spring, known only to the lovers, presented to Clementina (when she wished to contemplate them), the features of D'Rosonio, and so artfully was it constructed, that the trinket might have been mi-

nately examined without its being visible. For more than a year she had constantly worn it, and often had she thought that it would accompany her to the grave.

The task of writing to the count, and of explaining to him her reasons for resigning him, was the severest she had ever known; but a father's curse—could she resolve to incur that? impossible, and to preserve herself from this dreaded malediction, she resigned every earthly hope of happiness.

Her letter was indeed a mortal stab to the peace of the unfortunate count. His mind was too rightly turned to attempt to influence Clementina to act in opposition to the dictates of her conscience, and unable to remain and witness her marriage, he quitted Naples for some time.

In a short period after his departure, she gave her hand to the duke. She called all her fortitude to her aid during the ceremony, and when it was over,

she begged to retire for a few minutes. The signor D'Albici followed her to her apartment, he found her on her knees before a little altar, which was dedicated to her tutelar saint; her hands were clasped in fervent prayer, while her lovely eyes raised to Heaven, and the deep distress impressed upon her countenance, shewed that in the divine mercy was her only hope. On her father's entrance she hastily arose, "my child (cried he), I see, and I lament the hold which this unhappy passion has taken of your heart; but my Clementina will struggle with her weakness; think, my love, how different would be your feelings, had you rashly dared to brave the sacred authority of a parent; then every day would have added poignancy to your sufferings; the mists of passion would speedily disperse, and a father's maledictions would have poisoned your every enjoyment. Now you will find that every hour will diminish your regrets. In the new tie

which you have taken upon yourself; and in the consciousness of having fulfilled your duty, you will recover peace; and it must be *some* addition to your felicity, to know that you have rendered the declining years of your father happy. Take then, my beloved child, my thanks, and my blessing."

The signor's voice faultered as he pronounced the benediction, which his unfortunate daughter had purchased at so dear a rate; and it is probable that, at that moment, he might have regretted the sacrifice which he so inhumanly urged her to make. Clementina threw herself into his arms, and tears streamed from her eyes.

"My father, my dear father (cried she), let me again hear you bless your child."

"Oh, may Heaven bless thee as fervently as I do, my beloved girl" (said the signor), and he mingled his tears with hers. Hard was the struggle of the amiable duchess, to perform to

her lord the duties of a wife. Proud, sensual, and vindictive, the duke, when satiated with the possession of her person, remembered with bitterness, the reluctance with which she had bestowed upon him her hand, and he treated her either with neglect or studied contempt; to this behaviour Clementina appeared blind; ever gentle and submissive, ever anxious to anticipate his wishes, her conduct would have claimed respect from any man not void of humanity; but engrossed by licentious pleasures, or ambitious pursuits, the heart of the duke was inaccessible to those sentiments which she was formed to inspire.

Almost a twelvemonth had elapsed since the marriage of his daughter, and signor Albici saw no reason to rejoice in the success of his cruel project. His daughther was indeed surrounded by all that in the opinion of the world constitutes happiness; but the insufficiency of pomp and splendour to procure feli-

city, was at last obvious to the signor, and he saw that his child was a miserable victim to his own ambition: this thought preyed upon his mind, and the care which the duchess took to conceal from him all the causes of actual unhappiness which she had, hurt him more than the keenest reproaches would have done; he determined to remonstrate with the duke, but this idea he relinquished, when he considered the character of his son in-law, whose behaviour to him had for some time past been so coldly civil, that the signor saw nothing would give him greater pleasure than an opportunity of breaking with him. "I am justly punished (thought he), but, oh! my poor sacrificed girl, thou shouldst not have suffered for my fault!"

One night, at a masquerade, the duke was accosted by an elegant figure in the dress of sylph, and no habit could be better calculated to shew to advantage, the delicacy, and the ex-

quisite proportion of her light and graceful form; every limb was moulded by the hand of symmetry, and every charm was heightened by the studied display which she made of them. All eyes were fixed upon the lovely sylph, who glided along with all the lightness and grace peculiar to the ærial character which she had assumed.

"Look around thee, oh child of the dust (said she to the duke), all here is calculated to touch the senses, and to dazzle the imagination; the hand of beauty presents to thee the cup of pleasure, and her seducing voice invites thee to quaff the delicious draught; but thou, as if shell-bound by some evil genii, or malignant enchanter, gazest with torpid apathy on this enchanting scene."

"I acknowledge, benevolent sylph (replied the duke, who had listened to her soft accents with pleasure), that the most gloomy reflections had, at that moment, taken possession of my mind,

but thy magic powers have already dispelled them, and one glance from thy brilliant eyes will perfect my cure."

The sylph glided from him without a reply; the eyes of the duke followed her, and he saw her address a lady, whom in a few moments she led up to him.

"If thou art willing (cried she), to take me for thy guardian genii; much happiness awaits thee, but my favour must be purchased by an entire obedience to my commands; say, art thou content to accept the terms I offer?"

The duke bowed, and she continued, "receive from me a partner for the dance." She put the hand of the lady into his, and then walked away.

The duke, though much disappointed, was yet too gallant to be unmindful of his partner, whom he led to join the dancers; had not his thoughts been fixed upon the sylph, he would have been pleased with her fair friend, who possessed much grace and vivacity, and

seemed studious to attract his notice. After they had conversed for some time, the duke tried indirectly to learn who the sylph was, but this the other lady cautiously concealed. When the dance was ended, she declined joining in another, and she told her partner that she would no longer tax his gallantry, as she expected some friends, whom she wished to join; the duke was not displeased to part with her, for he resolved, if the sylph had not left the rooms, to endeavour to discover her.

He made the tour of them unsuccessfully, and he was returning to the ball room, when in a small apartment which he had neglected to enter, he caught, as the door was a-jar, a glimpse of the fair form which he was in search of; she had thrown herself on a sofa, but she arose hastily as he entered.

The duke caught her hand, and pressed with ardour for a sight of her face. For a long time she sustained her character and evaded his solicitations, but

at last, "I must be plain with you, signor (cried she), I see that I have excited your curiosity, but my vanity forbids me to gratify it. My face has, in truth, not a single charm to boast of; and after all the professions of admiration, which you have lavished upon me, think how my pride would be mortified to behold you erect your eyes with disgust, from that countenance which you are now so anxious to behold."

For some time the duke pleaded in vain; at length half-willing, half-reluctant, she suffered him to take off her mask; never had he beheld a countenance so fascinating, her features indeed were not regular, but her dark and brilliant eyes, her small ruby mouth, and the animated expression which constituted the principal charm of her face, struck the duke with the utmost admiration.

"Well, signor (cried she with a gay air), does your violence proceed from terror?" He caught her in his arms.

"Hold (said she, resentfully), if my favours are to be repaid with insult."

"Pardon me, lovely signora (cried the duke, interrupting her), and allow for the force of your charms on a susceptible heart; I thought indeed to have seen beauty, but I did not expect to have beheld such uncommon loveliness; wonder not then, that taken by surprise, I forgot for a single moment, that respect which is your due."

"Did you then really suppose (said she smiling), that I was the frightful creature, I represented myself to be? Oh, signor, how little do you know of our sex; had that been the case, believe me it is the last thing I should have avowed. Beauty is the gift of all others which our sex most wish to be thought possessed of it, nor is there any woman, who would chuse to own herself destitute of all pretensions to it, if she was conscious that she was speaking the truth. You will think me a strange

mad creature, for thus betraying to you the secrets of the sex, but—

"I think you are altogether the loveliest, the most fascinating angel that I ever beheld (exclaimed the duke), let me know, I beseech you, who you are, and never shall you have cause to repent your confidence."

A long conversation ensued, but the sylph was determined to preserve her incognito. She gave the duke hopes of seeing her again, and when they parted, she strictly charged him not to follow or endeavour to trace her.

"Your doing so (said she), will be vain, for you will find it impossible to discover who I am; and should I learn that you have disobeyed my commands, you will never behold me again."

"That threat is sufficient to make me all obedience" (cried the duke).

"Your obedience shall be rewarded (returned she), and now, signor, farewel."

She quitted him as she spoke, and for a moment he was tempted to transgress the promise which he had just given, and follow her; but the dread of losing her prevented him; he had never before seen a woman that interested him so much; the voluptuous graces of her person, made a strong impression upon his senses; while the apparent levity of her manners, promised success to his designs upon her, and the air of elegance that accompanied her every word and action, convinced him that his adventure was not a common one.

In this respect, he was indeed right, for he was about to become the victim of a deeply laid plot, and those arts which he had without scruple employed for the destruction of many unfortunate females, who had caught his light and fickle fancy, were speedily to be retorted upon himself; but wholly unsuspicious of the snare that was laid for him, he ran into it with avidity.

CHAP. II.

CLAUDIA FENINI (the enchantress who had fascinated the duke), was the daughter of a peasant, and her early days were spent in the most sordid poverty, and the grossest ignorance. Nature, which had been liberal to the person of Claudia, had also given her the strongest mental powers; but even from her birth her heart was depraved, and her vicious and ungovernable temper was a source of continual uneasiness to her parents. At a very early age, Claudia was sensible how much she was superior to her rustic companions, and her heart

panted for gayer scenes than her native village afforded.

"Of what use (thought she, as she contemplated her lovely face in the brook near her father's cottage), is it, that I am as handsome as the Countess Durazzi, if my days are to pass in obscurity, and to be embittered by toil? but why should it be so? why cannot I go to Rome? I may attract the notice of some rich and powerful signor, and spite of poverty and obscurity, I may yet outshine the haughty countess, who viewed me with such disdain, while I was employed in decking her boudoir with flowers."

The Countess Durazzi, whose beauty and grandeur had so disturbed the mind of Claudia, was a noble Sicilian, whose husband had lately purchased a palace in the neighbourhood of Claudia's parents; gentleness and dignity were equally the characteristics of the countess; but though she was pleased with the uncommon beauty of the young

peasant, she was disgusted with her bold and assured airs; and hence proceeded those glances of disapprobation, which had sunk deeply into the mind of Claudia, and inspired her with the design of going to Rome.

To a mind possessed of any degree of feminine delicacy, the thought of quitting for ever her parental roof, and throwing herself destitute upon the world, would have been dreadful; but Claudia was determined to emerge from obscurity, or perish in the attempt. She privately quitted her father's cottage, and took the road to Rome. Faint, weary, and exhausted by fatigue and want of nourishment, she at last reached that city, and the ambitious resolution which had prompted her journey, had nearly sunk under the difficulties which she had encountered. Though almost sinking for want of food, she was yet too proud to beg, and she was destitute of money to purchase any: she seated

herself under a portico, and burst into tears.

The Signor Montoni was passing at the moment, and the evident distress of the young peasant attracted his attention. In the soft accents of compassion, he asked the cause of her unhappiness; but Claudia, young as she was, was too artful to own all the truth. A few minutes thought enabled her to frame a story, that completely imposed upon the benevolent and unsuspecting Montoni. She was, she said, an orphan, and destitute of any means of support; she came to Rome to seek a service, but her money was exhausted, and she knew not what to do.

"Poor child (said the signor), thou shalt not want the shelter of a roof; come with me, and I will provide for thee." Claudia gladly obeyed, and followed the signor to his home. He called the person who superintended the affairs of his household, and gave her a charge to be kind to the young peasant.

Rest and food recruited the spirits and charms of Claudia; and when her benefactor saw her the next day, he was struck with admiration at her beauty. The signor was in the decline of life, and he had long determined never to marry; but though he had not rejected the favours of complying beauty, the sin of seduction was one from which he was wholly free. The youth and innocence of Claudia called for protection, and he strove to quel the tumultuous emotions which her surpassing loveliness excited.

"It would be the act of a fiend, to take advantage of her situation (thought he), I will be to her as a father."

The illness of a nephew, whom he meant to inherit his fortune, called him at this time from his home, and Claudia remained under the care of Viletta, his housekeeper. The goodness of her master, his extensive charities, his ample fortune, were the continual subjects of Viletta's praise. In the short inter-

view which Claudia had with the signor, she saw the admiration which she had inspired him with (for vanity is even more eagle-eyed than love), and most heartily did she wish that he might be the great signor destined to raise her from obscurity; any hope of his marrying her, she did not indulge, but she would have thought herself happy in being his mistress.

Montoni soon returned to Rome, and during his absence, Claudia had so ingratiated herself with Viletta, that she asked her master's permission to keep her as an assistant in the duties of her office.

"She is so apt, and so industrious (said the good woman), that I should find her a perfect treasure."

"Then you may suffer her to remain Vilètta (said the signor); provide for her whatever may be necessary, and remember that I do not wish you to be sparing of expence."

Viletta carried this intelligence to Claudia, who heard it with delight; but for some time she saw little of the signor; a fit of illness, in which she assisted Viletta to nurse him, threw her more in his way; she had naturally a sweet voice, and she warbled some simple airs, with a degree of feeling and taste, that to the partial Montoni appeared surprising; the magic of her tones always chaced away his pains, and she was frequently employed to lull him to repose. At length he began to recover, though slowly, and every hour made the company of Claudia more necessary to him; but the languid state of his health, concealed from him the danger to which he exposed himself, and in one unguarded moment every good resolution gave way, and he became, as he imagined, the seducer of the young orphan.

This event introduced to his bosom a new guest; it was remorse, from whose terrible visits he had been hither-

to free. "At what a price (thought he), have I purchased a transient pleasure; and what compensation can I make to the wretched victim of my unhallowed desires? The behaviour of Claudia, while it augmented his love for her, added to the weight of self-reproach, which was but too oppressive to his feelings. To provide for her amply, and to part with her immediately, was his firm resolve; but when, with well-dissembled sorrow, she implored not to be wholly banished his presence, when amidst her tears and her confusion, he thought he could perceive that she loved him, he was not proof against the wish she expressed to remain with him. He desired her to retire, and he began to consider the matter in a new light; that Claudia loved him, he was strongly inclined to believe, but the pride of birth forbade him to transplant this lovely flower into that soil, where she would bloom, and which she would ornament. "Yet, if she loves me (thought he), what injury can our con-

nexion be productive of to her? All that love and splendour can bestow she shall command." "Can either compensate for loss of innocence?" whispered Conscience; but her voice was drowned by the stronger one of passion, and Montoni made Claudia an offer of becoming his mistress. She accepted it with the greatest satisfaction; and the deceived Montoni thought that her love for him had reconciled her to a life of infamy.

The first masters in Rome were engaged by the signor for the instruction of his Claudia, whose progress in every accomplishment was his pride and delight. Well had it been for this evil-minded woman, had her natural disposition been capable of cultivation, but she was a rare example of inherent depravity; the benefits which Montoni lavished upon her, made not the smallest impression on her heart; she had never liked the signor, and a new passion, which superseded even avarice

and ambition, rendered him odious to her.

The Marquis de Laney, a French nobleman, whose gallantry and accomplishments rendered him a general favourite with the Italian ladies, saw, and was captivated with Claudia; nor was she less pleased with him. The unsuspecting Montoni left her in full possession of her liberty, and she soon let the marquis know the conquest he had made. De Laney received her advances with transport, and for some time, their intrigue was carried on with secresy.

Claudia gave the marquis several intimations of her wish to desert Montoni for him, but to these hints he appeared insensible; he was indeed fascinated with her person, but his fortune was moderate, and he did not wish to diminish it, by supporting a mistress in that stile of luxurious extravagance which he knew she would require Claudia saw that her hints were un-

vent it; but let us not poison the present by anticipations of the future. I cannot bear to see my Claudia's countenance robbed of its usual vivacity; look cheerfully, my love."

"De Laney (cried she, putting her hand in his), am I indeed dear to you?"

"Unkind Claudia, do you then doubt my affection? (returned the marquis)."

"Wouldst thou wish that I was wholly thine? (said she, without noticing his reply). Hear me, De Laney (continued she, preventing him from interrupting her), should any circumstance give me freedom and independence, nay, more, affluence, might I expect that Claudia would then be the chosen of thy heart?" She pressed the hand of the marquis to her lips, while her fine eyes were tenderly fixed upon his face as she spoke.

"Dearest Claudia (replied he), thou knowest that to be able to call thee wholly mine, would be the greatest

De Lancy in her project, it might, she thought, be easily executed, and she determined to do so speedily.

She took more than usual pains to adorn her person against their next meeting, which she purposely deferred for some time; at last a welcome summons reached De Laney, and he flew to the place of appointment.

"Claudia, my angel (exclaimed the marquis), what an age since we have met; a hundred times have I been tempted to transgress your injunction, never to write to you; so greatly did I long to know the reason of this unkind delay."

"It has not been my fault, De Laney (cried she), but I much doubt whether we shall be able to meet again; Montoni has suspicions of me; jealousy will soon convert them into certainties, and I foresee that we must part."

"No, dearest Claudia (said the marquis), I cannot consent to resign thee; some means must be thought of to pre-

nal perdition? wouldst thou commit a crime so black as murder?"

"Not willingly, De Laney (said she, terrified at the sternness of his looks); but think, how wholly my heart is thine, and then ask thyself, whether I could bear the thought of resigning thee?" "Thy heart (cried the marquis); oh, Heaven! is it possible that such depravity can exist in human shape; but mark me, Claudia, I do not ask thy promise (for I would not trust it), not to harm the life of Montoni; but I swear by every thing most sacred, that if thou dost, my vengeance shall pursue thee; thou shalt expiate thy crime in torments, of which thou canst not conceive an idea; for thy own sake then, respect the life of a man, whose generosity raised thee from beggary."

The natural haughtiness of Claudia overcame her terror, and she reproached the marquis with pusillanimity: "Had fear no greater influence on thy coward soul than conscience (cried she), thy

hand would readily strike the blow, but thou disguisest apprehension under the shew of humanity; fool that I have been to bestow my affections so unworthily."

The marquis deigned not to reply. He again repeated his threats of punishment, and left her. The behaviour of De Laney had converted her love for him into hatred, and the furies of rage and disappointment darted their scorpion stings into her heart. She impiously execrated herself and De Laney in the same breath; now she vowed that both Montoni and the marquis should perish; and the next moment the fear of punishment staggered her resolution.

Practised as she was in dissimulation, she could not bear to meet the eye of Montoni, and on her return she feigned illness, and retired to bed; had she possessed the smallest spark of feeling, the kindness of the signor would have wrung her heart. The agitation of her

spirits had produced a slight degree of fever, which the tenderness of Montoni magnified; the first physicians in Rome were summoned, and the signor hung over the couch of this bosom serpent with the fondest solicitude. For some days, the baleful passions which tormented this woman's mind prevented her recovery; and she was still an invalid, when the illness of his favourite nephew, whose recovery was very doubtful, obliged Montoni to leave her for a few days. Never was news so welcome to Claudia. The absence of the signor, would (she thought), afford her leisure to devise some plan to rid herself both of him and De Laney, who was now more odious to her than even Montoni; she was, however, spared the commission of the crime which she meditated; the illness of Montoni's nephew was a pestilential fever, the signor caught it, and his recovery was in a few days declared impossible.

Montoni met death with the firm-

ness of a christian. One only sin of magnitude hung upon his mind; this was the injury that he had (as he supposed) done to Claudia, to whom he dictated a letter, in which, in the most affecting terms, he bade her farewel; and while he supplicated her to pardon him, he besought her not to let any temptation plunge her into a similar error in future; he painted in the liveliest colours, the remorse that he felt for having caused her fall from virtue; and he concluded by an assurance, that his only consolation was, the having it in his power to provide amply for her.

The conclusion of his letter was indeed the only part of it to which Claudia attended; her joy at his death was excessive; "liberty, and independence (said she) are now my own, and happiness awaits me."

It was not without some regret that she relinquished the idea of taking vengeance upon De Laney, but self was

ever her predominant consideration; she dreaded that her design might be discovered, and if it was, certain punishment awaited her. The fear of this made her at first hesitate, and finally give up her design, and to her pusillanimity alone De Laney owed his life.

Released now from every restraint, she plunged into the vortex of unbounded libertinism, and her wit and beauty drew many men of rank into her snares; her unbounded extravagance however soon reduced her to pecuniary difficulties, and her admirers by degrees deserted her; she was still very young, and lovely as ever, and she determined to leave Rome, and seek at Naples for some lover, who was rich and weak enough to support her in the style to which she had latterly been accustomed.

CHAP. III.

She had not been many days at Naples, when she fancied that in the Duke D'Vinci she had discovered a man fit for her purpose; and she waited only for an opportunity of throwing herself in his way, when the masquerade presented one that she determined to improve.

The duke's libertinism and inconstancy were notorious, and Claudia thought that it would require some artifice to inspire him with a real passion. In order to effect this, she determined to give an air of mystery to her

proceedings, and not to suffer herself to be too easily won. Naturally keen and penetrating, she saw, and rejoiced in the impression which at their first interview, she was convinced, she had made; she suffered some days to elapse before she let the duke hear from her; at last, when his impatience was at the height, and he had nearly given up his fascinating incognita, he received the following

BILLET:

"I know by the magic powers with which I am gifted, how extremely unjust you have been to your Sylph, but I forgive your suspicions; believe me, it was not as you have thought, a wish to raise a curiosity that I did not mean to gratify, which induced me to defer our interview; other, and more weighty considerations influenced me; but I am now at liberty to see you, and should your devotion lead you to vespers this

evening, at the church of St. Giovanni, you will find a person who will conduct you to the

"SYLPH."

The duke pressed the billet with rapture to his lips, and his impatience led him to the church even before the hour of vespers; but the service was ended, and nearly every person had quitted the church, when a woman veiled, advanced towards him; she beckoned him to follow her, and he obeyed in silence. She walked with a quick pace 'till she had got a short distance from the town, and then stopped at a garden-gate, which she opened. "We are at length at our journey's end, signor," (said she, as the duke followed her into the garden). She led him to a small house, and opening the door of an apartment, requested him to enter, and in a few moments he would see her lady.

The duke obeyed, and when left to himself, he gazed with surprise upon

every thing round him. The plain, and indeed rather mean appearance of the house, afforded a striking contrast to the voluptuous elegance of the boudoir in which he was; and while he examined the furniture and ornaments, he owned that it was decorated with a degree of luxury and taste that surpassed every thing he had hitherto seen.

But the entrance of Claudia drew his attention wholly to herself. She was habited with an apparent simplicity; but her dress was in reality calculated to show her light and lovely figure to the greatest advantage.

"How shall I ever thank you as I ought, (cried the duke, seizing the hand which she held out to him, and pressing it with rapture to his lips,) for this favour?"

"Which you began to think I never meant to grant you. Is it not so, signor?" (replied she, with an arch smile.)

"I shall begin to believe that you are indeed possessed of magic powers, (cried the duke), for I own that you have divined my thoughts; but let me thus beseech your pardon."

He threw himself upon his knees. Claudia raised him, and seating herself by his side, began a conversation, which she carried on for some time with the greatest sprightliness.

The freedoms which the levity of her manner encouraged, she repelled with an air of *hauteur*; and she dismissed the duke at the end of two hours, more seriously captivated with her than he had ever been with any woman in his life.

Interview succeeded interview, and so artfully did Claudia behave, that when at last she yielded to his wishes, he thought her doing so proceeded from her unbounded passion for him; and he felt proud of his imaginary triumph over the honour of a woman, whose

favours had been already indiscriminately bestowed.

Claudia now no longer refused to gratify his curiosity with an account of her life, and she easily fabricated a tale that imposed upon him; she represented herself as of noble birth, and that she had been early in her life united to a man much older than herself, and who was since dead; business she said, induced her to visit Naples, and a chance view of him, inspired her with a passion that had prompted her to take the steps she did.

This story the duke implicitly believed; and the apparent sincerity, the simple, and the unstudied manner of Claudia might indeed have induced a man of greater penetration to have given credit to it. This enchantress seemed to have vanquished the natural inconstancy of his temper, but in proportion to his fondness for her was his neglect and indifference to the lovely

duchess, whom he now regarded with aversion, and whom he took every opportunity of mortifying by the most marked and open slights.

But for her father's sake, Clementina would have been almost indifferent to his treatment of her; her hopes and wishes were fixed upon a better world; but when she saw the anguish which her husband's brutality caused her father, when she beheld him bending under the weight of self-reproach, her spirit revolted at the insults which her unworthy husband daily offered her.

The Count D'Rosonio frequently heard from Naples, and the behaviour of the duke to his lovely wife, sharpened the thorn that still continued to wrankle in his heart. In the hope that the dangers and occupations of a military life would, in some degree, banish those reflections that rendered existence insupportable to him, he entered the Spanish army, and his courage and

humanity soon rendered him t
spected and beloved. His cousin
talva, served in the same regime
him. In the heat of action, t
nor received a severe wound,
the moment that he was sinking
his adversary's sword, D'Rosonio
forward to his assistance, and bc
from the field. This was the act
Montalva so solemnly vowed
member, and most truly did h
his word.

Peace was proclaimed soon aft
the friends, who were now tr
tached to each other, were unwi
separate; they resolved to visit
together, and Montalva indu
hope that the ladies of that cel
city would possess sufficient attr
to banish the unhappy passion
the count was still unable to co
but his hopes were vain, D'I
was indeed polite, and attentive
Spanish beauties, but his heart w
Clementina's, and he acknowlec

Montalva, that it would never own another flame.

"Well, Heaven be praised D'Rosonio, that my temper does not resemble thine (said the signor one day to his cousin), for if it did, I should be more miserable than I am: know, my friend, that I am in love, and that I have at this moment reason to fear that I shall never possess the object of my passion."

"You jest, surely, Montalva (cried the count), or you have hitherto been very secret in your amour, for I never had the least idea of it."

"To all my secrets thou art welcome, D'Rosonio (replied his friend), but this was not my own, it was in truth intrusted to me by a fond and unsuspecting girl, and I had pledged myself to her, that not even the man nearest to my heart, should know it till she gave me permission to reveal it. I had hoped, I own, that you would have had to congratulate me upon my suc-

cess—not to condole with me on my disappointment,"

The melancholy air with which Montalva uttered these words, proved that his heart was more interested than he was willing to acknowledge.

"Let me know (cried the count), what has occasioned your disappointment; I do not make professions, Stephano, but if my friendship can in any way be serviceable to thee, tax it to the utmost."

"I would accept your offer willingly (replied Montalva), for I know the sincerity with which it is made; but in this affair, thou canst not serve me. The mistress of my heart is about to be sacrificed to age and deformity, and so strictly is she guarded, that there is not a possibility of her making an escape; but I may now relate to thee the particulars of my adventure."

"Some time ago, I was rambling one night without any fixed plan, I heard as I passed the back of a magnificent

house, the voices of women in conversation, and the particular secretness of one of them, induced me for a moment to listen, without reflecting on what I was doing.

" ' I think thou art mad, Rosana, (cried she), or at least I should be, if I followed thy advice; how can I tell that the signor's heart is disengaged; or that, if it is, he would bestow it upon me?'

"You know that of all the perfections which we admire in a woman, there is not one to me so attractive as an harmonious voice, and never did I hear tones so full of sweetness.

" ' That the Signor Montalva (at the mention of my own name, I became still more attentive)—That the Signor Montalva is a disengaged man (replied the other lady), I will not venture to say, though we have no reason to imagine the contrary; but admitting that he is, I do not think that you can for a moment doubt that he would receive

an intimation of your regard with transport. Cold and insensible must indeed be the heart of that man who could reject the love of such a woman as my Clara.'

"'I prithee, dear tempter (said Clara), no more; I will not sin against maiden modesty. Heavens! should he reject me. Oh, Rosana, I cannot bear the thought."

"'Were you in any other circumstances (cried Rosana), it would be the last step that I should urge you to take, but when there is a chance of escaping a forced marriage, and of being happy with the man you love, it is at least worth the trial; your duenna would soon learn for you whether Montalva has any attachment, and if his heart is indeed free, doubt not, dear cousin, of your power to captivate him.'

"'I have not courage to run the risk of being rejected, and perhaps scorned (said Clara). Don Juan will not surely attempt to carry his threats into effect;

but if he should, I have still a resource at the foot of the altar; I will protest against the violence offered to my inclinations, and declare an intention of taking the veil: in a cloister, I shall at least enjoy tranquillity, if I must not hope for happiness.'

"The last words were scarcely articulate, and the moment after, I could hear her sob audibly; her companion attempted to console her, and they left the apartment.

"I cannot tell thee, D'Rosonio, how strongly interested I felt for Clara; I would have given the world to know, whether I was indeed the fortunate man on whom she had bestowed her heart. From the title, signor, I was inclined to hope it might be so; yet it was more than possible that Madrid contained others of the same name and country as thy friend, though I knew it not. I resolved the next day to endeavour to find out the name and situa-

tion of Clara, and at all events, to try to see her.

" I was circumspect in my enquiries, but I learned enough to convince me, that Clara would be one of the noblest matches in Spain. She was an orphan of illustrious family, and immense fortune. Her father, the Marquis De Liners, had bequeathed the guardianship of her person and property to Don Juan De——, with a proviso, that if she married without her guardian's consent, she was to forfeit her estate. To this indiscreet and fatal clause, all the misery of the lovely Clara was owing. Her charming person and princely portion, tempted Don Juan to endeavour, by marrying her, to gain possession of both ; he expected indeed that she would receive his proposal with reluctance, for he is old enough to be her grandfather ; but he trusted to the natural sweetness of her temper, and the readiness that she had hitherto

shewn to obey his wishes, for her compliance. Men of the first rank had sought the hand of the fair orphan in vain. Don Juan was resolved never to consent to her marriage with any one but himself. He kept her a close prisoner, and never suffered her to go even to church, without accompanying her.

"Having learned this much, my next step was to consider how I could see Clara; and that, as she was circumstanced, was in truth no easy task; it was one that I resolved to undertake, and for several nights and days, I strolled near the house of Don Juan, in the hope that I might by accident get a glimpse of her: but my hopes were disappointed, and just as I had began to despair of letting her know by any means the passion I persuaded myself I felt for her, I saw an old female domestic, whom I fancied was her Duenna, come out of the gate.

"I followed the woman, but for some

time, I did not venture to address her. I eyed her with much significance, and I could not help thinking that she returned my glances.

"'You have (said I, encouraged by her manner), or I am mistaken, the happiness of serving the loveliest lady in Spain.'

"'You are right, sir (replied she), I am indeed the attendant of one of the best, as well as the most beautiful of one of the Castilian dames."

"'Fame speaks loudly of the virtues, as well as the charms of Donna Clara (returned I), and happy will the man be who obtains possession of so invaluable a prize.'

"'Ah, poor lady (said she), her hand will, I fear, be unaccompanied with her heart.'

"Not to tire your patience, Fernando, I prevailed, without much difficulty, upon Francisca, to deliver a letter for me to her lovely mistress: in this epistle, I supplicated for an interview,

and Francisca promised, that in a few days, I should have an answer.

"My trusty messenger was as good as her word, and I received a summons to the window, where I had overheard the conversation that flattered me with a relief of Clara's partiality.

"The angelic girl was at the casement at the appointed hour. With the most enchanting timidity, she excused the manner of my reception, but admittance to the house was, she said, impossible to procure, without a risk of my safety, which she would not run.

"You, D'Rosonio, can, without being told, fancy what passed. Clara ingenuously informed me of the particulars of her situation, and avowed her reluctance to become the wife of Don Juan; but in reply to my pressing intreaties to escape, and bless me with her hand, she reminded me, that by such a step, she should forfeit her fortune.

"'Perish the dross, (cried I, while I

gazed with rapture on her lovely countenance, which, at that moment, the moon afforded me a sufficient light to contemplate distinctly), if you, beauteous Clara would be content to share the moderate portion, which I can call mine, how transcendant would be my felicity.'

"To this proposal she would not give a positive reply, but she promised to consider of it, and she laid me under the strictest injunction of secresy. As to our interview, I promised to be silent, even to thee, Fernando, 'till I was allowed to entrust thee; and I left Clara more captivated than I had ever been.

"Though I had never determined against matrimony, yet, the smallness of my fortune had made me think, that when I sought a wife, it should be one possessed of riches; but the beauty of Clara, her situation, and above all, her partiality for me, determined me to make her mine, if she consented. I

am disgusted with the gay scenes of dissipation; and retirement with a wife like Clara, would, I fancied, afford me happiness.

"But these gay visions were speedily dissipated by some unlucky accident. Don Juan discovered that his ward had a favoured lover, and though my person remained unknown to him, our interviews were from this time at an end: the Duenna was discharged with disgrace, and Clara more closely confined than ever.

"'Do not despair signor, (said Francisca to me), my lady will never become the wife of Don Juan, and spite of the vigilance of her tyrant, we shall yet devise some plan of escape.'

The assurances of Francisca for some time kept up my spirits, but day after day passed, and I heard nothing from Clara. I sometimes ventured near the window, but her lovely form was never visible; and I began to despair, when

my fears were confirmed by the following letter, which she found means to convey to me.

"This will be probably the last opportunity that I shall have to address you. Dearest Montálva, I have struggled vainly to procure the consent of Don Juan. I have offered him my whole fortune, for I well knew your disinterested affection for me would induce you to resign it with pleasure, but he has vowed, solemnly vowed, never to yield my hand to another. To escape is impossible, I have, therefore, but one alternative; if I cannot be your's, at least I will preserve inviolate the fidelity which I owe you, and a convent shall shelter me from the persecutions of this hateful man; he talks of having our nuptials speedily celebrated, but never, never will I consent to become his.

"Oh Montalva! what pangs rend my heart, when I bid you an eterna

farewel! May Heaven bestow upon you, that happiness of which it has for ever deprived the wretched

"CLARA."

"This Rosonio, is our present situation. My angelic Clara flatters herself in vain with the hope of escaping the power of Don Juan; how easily may he have the ceremony performed in spite of her tears or reluctance: this idea maddens me; I could, I think, with fortitude resign her to a man with whom she would have even a chance of happiness; but what hope can there be in such a union?"

"Do not despair, my friend (cried D'Rosonio), while your mistress remains unmarried, there still is hope. Can the genius of Francisca devise no plan, by which it might be possible to procure Clara's escape?"

"We have thought of, and rejected many (said Montalva); in truth, Clara

is so strictly confined, that I greatly fear every attempt must be hopeless."

The count knew too well what the pangs of unsuccessful love were, to attempt to alleviate them by common place consolations; he endeavoured by a series of the most delicate and friendly attentions to (in some measure) console his friend, who was, he saw with concern, more deeply wounded than, from his volatile nature, D'Rosonio had supposed possible.

One day, Montalva returned home pale, and apparently agitated to excess. "What disturbs my friend?" eagerly demanded the count.

"I have just heard, that to-morrow robs me for ever of Clara (replied Montalva), I have long known that preparations were making for her nuptials, and the ceremony is to be performed to-morrow, after high mass, in the church of Pietro A'Majella: but Don Juan shall not thus tear her from

me, I will rush forward, and at the foot of that altar, where he would oblige her to profane the most solemn vows, I will claim my affianced bride."

"I will second you to the utmost of my power (cried the count). Every thing shall be risked to prevent this hateful union; tranquillize your spirits then, Montalva, and doubt not that we shall succeed."

The following morning, the friends repaired to the church of Pietro A'Majella, before the beginning of high mass. In a short time, Don Juan and Donna Clara entered, with a numerous and splendid retinue. When D'Rosonio beheld the bridegroom sinking under the weight of age and infirmities, he felt indignant that such a being should presume to aspire to the hand of the young and lovely Clara.

Joy and exultation sparkled in the eyes of Don Juan, and the friends were surprised at the calmness with

which Clara behaved; she was pale indeed, but her countenance was perfectly serene; she lost her self-command, however, when she beheld her lover, and for some moments her agitation was very great; she recovered herself, and gave him a look full of affection. Soon after mass began, and every faculty of Clara appeared absorbed in devotion. She prayed with uncommon fervour; and as she cast her lovely eyes to that Heaven which she supplicated, the colour revisited her palled cheek, and to Montalva and his friend, she appeared something celestial.

When mass was over, Don Juan led her to the altar, and the ceremony was about to begin. D'Rosonio and Montalva drew near, and the signor was upon the point of rushing forward to assert his claim, when a look from Clara prevented him.

"Stop, holy father (cried she to the bishop, who had began the nuptial rites), stop, I conjure you."

" Proceed (said Don Juan). Is this your promise, Clara?"

" I appeal to the church, and to you as its minister, (cried she, without regarding the words of her guardian), I am the victim of the most cruel tyranny, and I solicit the protection of the church."

" You shall have it, daughter (said the prelate), provided your complaint is just."

" Her words are false, reverend father (cried Don Juan), she voluntarily accompanied me here; she promised me her hand; and now she wishes to evade the performance of her promise, solemnly, sacredly, as it was made."

" Hear me, I beseech you, father (said Clara). I am an orphan, I have no friend, I appeal to your humanity; oh! as you hope for mercy at the last day, let not the appeal be made in vain."

The interesting loveliness of the fair supplicant, and her affecting energy,

moved the heart of the good bishop he desired to hear her tale, and th simple, unvarnished manner in whic it was told, persuaded him of its trutl When she came to the period at whic her guardian discovered her preferenc of Montalva, whose name she concealed she proceeded as follows.

CHAP. IV.

"When Don Juan declared his determination never to consent to my union with another, and rejected the offer I made him of my whole fortune, I begged to be allowed to spend one year in a convent; (if he was indeed determined to force me to be his, before our union took place); but even this request was denied me, and he resolved to have the ceremony performed without delay. Driven by this tyranny to have recourse to stratagem, I feigned to acquiesce with his wishes, only stipulating that our marriage should be

public, with which he readily complied. I now protest, solemnly protest, that I would prefer death a thousand times to the misery of being his: if I am not allowed to unite myself with the man of my heart, I ask only to be permitted to spend the rest of my days in the retirement of a cloister; where, in the duties of religion, I may, perhaps, obtain that peace which, as the wife of Don Juan, I should never again taste."

"I cannot proceed with the ceremony (said the bishop to Don Juan), and I could wish, sir, to speak to you in private."

Don Juan and Donna Clara left the church, accompanied by the father; and Montalva and his friend quitted it at the same time.

The signor returned home with very different sensations to what he felt when he repaired to the church. Hope, which was then extinct, now revived in his heart, and whispered, that Clara might yet be his.

Nor were her whispers false, the good bishop represented the matter in such colours to Don Juan, that he consented, though with difficulty, to the union of the lovers: he would rather indeed that Clara had taken the veil, but this the father strenuously opposed.

"To offer to Heaven (said he), a heart that is already fixed upon an earthly lover, is a profanation that frequently calls down the Divine vengeance. In the gloom and solitude of a cloister, where no objects occur to interest or amuse, the remembrance of an adored object is involuntarily cherished, until every effort to banish it becomes vain; and the heart corroded by the most bitter and unavailing regrets, is incessantly torn by a struggle to perform those duties to which it is unequal.

"To voluntarily doom a fellow being to such a state of misery, is an act of cruelty of which a generous mind must

surely be incapable; and in this ca
your wish to do so would be a va
one; that interest which you well knc
I possess at court, and which I ha
never yet exerted for myself, shall
strained to the utmost in behalf
Clara; nor will our gracious soverei
suffer the orphan of a noble and loy
subject to sink beneath evident injusti
and oppression."

It is probable that the threats of tl
bishop had more weight with Don Ju
than his arguments or intreaties; b
the lovers cared little to what motiv
they owed the consent, which he
reluctantly and ungraciously gave
their union.

Her guardian's consent once obtaine
Clara did not delay the happiness of h
lover, and their marriage was celebrat
with a splendour befitting their ra
and birth.

In the possession of his Clara, Mo
talva thought himself the happiest
men. The Spanish ladies are in gen

ral far from accomplished, but the retirement in which she had always lived, had been favourable to the mind of Signora Montalva. Naturally of an active temper, she had, instead of passing her time like the generality of her countrywomen, in indolence and luxury, sedulously cultivated her natural talents; and as she possessed a genius equally strong and brilliant, she had not contented herself with the usual acquirements of her sex, and Montalva found in her a companion capable of sharing in those literary pursuits, of which he was himself passionately fond.

In the felicity enjoyed by his friends, D'Rosonio would have found a balm for his own unhappiness, had not the accounts he received from Naples excited at once his grief and his indignation. The duke gave the most scandalous publicity to his amour with Claudia, and the Signor D'Albici, unable to bear the injuries that were daily offered to his daughter, had come to an open rupture

with his son-in-law, and the amiable and suffering duchess was forbade to see her father.

This last cruel restriction was the death blow to the peace of the unfortunate signor: though he had sacrificed his daughter to his ambition, yet, he tenderly loved her; and the knowledge, that in the midst of pomp and splendour, she was more miserable than she could have been in the most humble situation, stung him to the soul; but when he reflected that her misery was solely owing to himself, the torments of his mind became insupportable, and he took the rash resolution of ending them by suicide. Previous to his death he wrote to the duke, and in the most affecting and solemn manner, besought him to change his conduct to his wife; he painted in the most energetic terms, the mildness, the angelic forbearance of Clementina; he assured him that not a single murmur had ever passed her lips, and that on the subject

of her husband's conduct she had been uniformly silent.

"But though my injured and unhappy child (pursued the signor), does not complain, yet all Naples is aware of the treatment she receives; and her father, her infatuated father, has no refuge but the grave, from the misery which he has brought upon himself by sacrificing his beloved and only child.

"Oh! may my death be a bond of union between you and my daughter; never will Clementina know that I have perished by my own hand; and may that Almighty power who protects innocence, grant, that the tears which this event will draw from her eyes, may be dried by the hand of a repentant and affectionate husband.

"On his knees, my lord, a wretched heart-broken old man, beseeches your mercy to his child: recal to your memory the moment that gave my Clementina to your arms, blooming in

youth, health, and beauty; view her now, sinking beneath affliction, and young as she still is, exhibiting scarcely the remains of her former self. Ask your own conscience, who has caused the change? Oh! let her voice be attended to, and the future years of my child may yet be happy.

"Farewel, my lord, receive my pardon for what is past; but may Heaven so deal with you, as you do in future with my Clementina; this will be the last wish, the last prayer of the unhappy

"D'Albici."

The perusal of this letter, hard as the duke's heart was, had some effect upon it. The body of the unfortunate signor was found in a river at some distance from his house, and his death was, by all but the duke, supposed to be accidental. The grief of the duchess for her father, was a little alleviated by the kindness and attention

with which her husband treated her; and she received the proof which he gave of his regard with such unaffected gratitude and sensibility, that when the duke contrasted her sweet and engaging manners, with the studied allurements, the meretricious graces of Claudia, he was amazed how that artful and unprincipled woman could ever have obtained such a power over his senses.

"I will see her no more" (said he), and for a time he kept his word; happy would it have been for him had he never broken it.

The rage and disappointment of Claudia, at his desertion, would have known no bounds, but that he still was liberal to her, and that she entertained hopes that she should soon lure him back again. She was well read in the turnings and windings of the human heart, and she rightly judged that of the duke was too de-

praved to be long attached to a being, so unlike himself as the duchess.

" He will soon be heartily tired of her mild virtues (said she, with a malignant sneer), and then will be my time to establish my empire more firmly than ever."

In order to persuade him of her grief and her fidelity, she affected an air of privacy; her equipage no longer was seen in the public walks, and her days were spent in retirement.

But while the duke supposed that she was spending her time in tears and lamentations for his absence, she was in reality indulging a new and most disgraceful passion.

A gamester of ruined fortune and infamous character saw and admired her; he was distressed—and he conceived the infamous project of making her administer to his pleasures, and likewise his necessities. To any one who knew the disposition of Claudia

(in which avarice was a principal *trait*,) this plan would have appeared likely to be wholly unsuccessful, since he did not possess the means of conciliating her favour, either by money or present; nor was he possessed of any graces or attractions that were likely to catch the eye, even of a professed wanton. But there is no accounting for the strange capricious whims of a confirmed votary of vice. Claudia soon doated on her paramour, and the bounty of the duke was lavished on a wretch equally mean and infamous: yet as it was of the utmost consequence to her, to regain his favour, she acted with circumspection, and received the visits of her new lover with the greatest privacy.

The deep impression which the death of Signor D'Albici had made upon the mind of the duke, wore away by degrees, and as his licentious mistress predicted, he grew tired of the society of his amiable wife, yet he did not

chuse openly to renew his intercourse with Claudia, or to treat the duchess with that avowed neglect and indifference which he had formerly done; but he resolved to visit Claudia secretly, and to seek in her blandishments an antidote to the *ennui* and listlessness that hung upon his spirits.

Claudia had a female servant, on whose fidelity she had the firmest reliance, and this girl had been as much attached to her as the depraved are capable of being to each other, till her connexion with Carlo Riccolini, her present paramour. Previous to her entering the service of Claudia, she had been this man's mistress, and though his threats and intreaties prevailed upon her to be silent as to their former connexion, she yet hated Claudia as a successful rival, and waited only for an opportunity to work her ruin.

One evening, while Carlo and Claudia were together, the duke came privately, and without attendants, to

her house: this girl was in the hall as he entered, and the sight of him was most welcome to her. "Now for revenge" (thought she, and she feigned to receive him with an air of confusion, and embarrassment.)

"How is Claudia? conduct me to her," (said the duke.)

"My lady cannot receive your excellency (said she), because"—she stopped, apparently as if she knew not how to proceed.

The duke, who was wholly void of suspicion, exclaimed, "What! is she ill? What is her complaint?"

"No, not ill, your excellency—Oh! yes, she is ill."

The manner in which this sentence was uttered, as well as the contradiction it implied, was sufficient to rouse injurious ideas even in the most candid mind, and for the first time a doubt of Claudia's fidelity occurred to the duke; he was hastily passing the girl, when she attempted to stop him; forgetful of

her sex, he threw her from him with violence, and walked up stairs; he passed through several apartments till he came to her boudoir, (that boudoir which had been so often the scene of his guilty pleasures). The door was of glass, and the curtains which shaded it were partly undrawn; through it the duke beheld Carlo reclined upon a sofa, and hanging over him, in an attitude of fondness, stood Claudia.

Astonishment for some moments rivetted De Vinci to the spot where he stood, and before he recovered himself sufficiently to rush in, Claudia addressed her paramour.

"This is unkind, Carlo, (said she in that soothing tone to which the heart of the duke had so often vibrated with transport,) you know that I am at present poor—you know that I would not refuse you the money if I had it; when did Claudia refuse a request of Carlo's?"

"But if you have not the money,

you have jewels," (replied he, in a sullen tone).

"None but what are the gifts of the duke; and those, you well know, it would be madness to part with" (said she).

"I understand you, madam (cries Carlo), you cannot part with those trinkets, presented you by a lover who still possesses your heart."

"How often must I tell you (exclaimed she, passionately), that your suspicions are unjust? How often must I assure you, that for your sake I loath this man, and nothing but necessity should ever induce me to see him again? But prythee, dearest Carlo, be reasonable, though these jewels are nearly all of value which I possess, yet I refuse them only from the fear that he should know that I have parted with them; was I assured that would not be the case, thou shouldst have them freely. Oh! what shouldst thou

not have that was in Claudia's power to to grant."

"Then set thy heart at rest, for he shall never know what thou hast done with them; should they be enquired for, it is easy to invent a tale that they are lost, and you know not Claudia the service that they will be of to me."

"Thou shalt have them, love (cried she), smile then with thy usual cheerfulness; thou knowest thy smiles are the delight of my heart."

She threw her arms around him as she spoke, and pressed her lips to his. The duke could bear no more—he drew his sword and rushed into the apartment. The guilty pair started from the couch as he entered. "Base, infamous woman! (exclaimed he) couldst thou find no minion for thy lascivious hours but such a wretch as this?" He made a furious pass at Carlo as he spoke, who stepped aside to evade it. The duke pressed upon him, and the villain, drawing a stiletto from his bo-

som, plunged it in the breast of De Vinci, at the same moment that the duke's sword entered his side.

The screams of Claudia brought up her domestics. The wretched woman, whose discovery of her guilt was the cause of the fatal catastrophe, was nearly frantic when she saw Carlo weltering in his blood, and her violent outcries alarmed the neighbourhood. The house was presently filled, and officers of justice were sent for.

The duke expired almost immediately upon receiving his wound, but Carlo still survived. He was, together with Claudia and the domestic who accused herself as the cause of all, committed to prison.

The feelings of the duchess upon this occasion were acute in the extreme, and with the most pious fervency did she supplicate the mercy of Heaven for her guilty husband. The short interval of kindness, which had succeeded his cruel treatment of her, had wholly oblite-

rated from the gentle and feeling mind of Clementina all traces of resentment; and she wept bitterly, when she reflected upon the unprepared state in which he was called to his last account.

The lover who for years has sighed for an adored object that he despaired of ever possessing, and has at last enjoyed the transport of calling that beloved one his, only can conceive the rapture with which D'Rosonio learned that his Clementina was free.

Montalva and the Signora warmly congratulated him on this unhoped-for happiness. "You will soon revisit Naples, dear D'Rosonio (cried Montalva), and we must try to prevail upon my Clara to accompany us thither."

"You know (said she), that I have no will but yours, and when you wish to depart, I will go with cheerfulness."

She thought not that there was a storm gathering over her head, that would compel her to fly from Madrid

and that malice and superstition would prevent her ever returning to it.

Don Juan D—— had never forgiven her rejection of him. His heart (naturally revengeful) was torn by the sight of the happiness which she enjoyed with Montalva, and he panted for an opportunity to be revenged on her. The mind that is enlightened by science cannot respect opinions or tenets, however ancient, that are erroneous: Clara had spoken freely on the subject of an Auto D'Fe, which was recently celebrated; and she had, in expressing the greatest pity for the unhappy sufferers, openly arraigned the justice of the power that punished them. To breathe but a syllable against the Inquisition, is to subject oneself to the most dreadful punishments, but the conversation would for ever have remained unknown, but for the malignity of Don Juan; he was told of it in confidence, by one of the guests of Montalva, who meant not harm

to Clara, and he denounced her to the Inquisition, as a scoffer at its power.

An accusation of less weight would have been sufficient to endanger the life of the Signora Montalva. Most fortunately for her, a concealed friend gave her notice that she was about to be arrested, by order of the Holy Tribunal, and advised her to seek for safety in flight.

CHAP. V.

NEARLY distracted with terror on his wife's account, Montalva would not suffer her to delay her escape; and from the hasty manner in which they quitted Spain, they took with them but little that was of value; and scarcely were they arrived in safety at Naples, when they received the unwelcome intelligence, that the whole property of the Signora Montalva was confiscated.

Montalva received this intelligence with more fortitude than Clara, who deeply regretted the loss of fortune, on her husband's account.

"I have saved thee, my love! (said he) and while thou art safe, how can I repine? Banish thy uneasiness, dearest Clara; we have still a competence, and the heart of my beloved sighs not, I well know, for the gratifications of luxury or ambition."

"Oh, Montalva! (cried she) when I think what a noble use thou wouldst have made of the princely inheritance of my ancestors, which, in thy hands, would have been a blessing to thousands, I cannot but repine that it is lost to us for ever."

Montalva wiped away the pearly drops that stole down her cheek as she spoke, and the fond soothings of her beloved husband soon, in a great measure, dissipated her uneasiness.

D'Rosonio speedily joined his friend, and the lovely duchess received him with a pleasure which she sought not to conceal. Relieved now from a tie that had been the bane of her happiness, Clementina dared to acknowledge to her own heart, that she loved and was beloved by

the most amiable of men. Her nuptials with the count were celebrated as soon as decency would permit; and as the wife of D'Rosonio, she enjoyed a happiness even more transcendant than she had hoped for.

Similarity of temper and disposition soon united Clementina and the Signora Montalva in the strictest friendship, and the count and Montalva were delighted with the affection which they shewed for each other. Two years had elapsed since the marriage of Montalva, and his lovely wife had as yet given no promise of an encrease to his family; but about the beginning of the third, Montalva had reason to hope that his wishes for a child would be granted; and at the same time the pregnancy of Clementina was announced.

"Should heaven send to the one a boy, and to the other a girl (said D'Rosonio to his friend), it will perhaps be a means of drawing our families still closer, by the union of our children."

Montalva heartily hoped that it mi be so: but they were disappointed; the ladies were delivered, within month of each other, of two boys.

"Well! (said Montalva) our child will at least be friends, and should h ven send us others, our project may be realized."

But years stole away, and neither the ladies again proved with child. T boys were almost constantly togeth and the fathers flattered themselves t their friendship would be perpetua between their children.

The dispositions of D'Rosonio a Montalva were similar, though th tempers were different; but neither disposition nor temper did there ex the smallest similarity between th sons. Open, generous, and unsuspe ing, the heart of the young D'Roso was formed for love and friendsh Though naturally acute and penetrati the warmth of his temper rendered h blind to the faults of those whom

; and even in his childish days,
istresses of others had at any time
r to deter him from the pursuit of
wn gratifications, if by relinquishing
he could serve a fellow-creature.
ıpetuosity of temper often led him
the commission of trivial errors, but
were acknowledged with candour,
ıo temptation could lead him to dis-
or conceal the truth.
ıe domestics and the vassals of
ıt D'Rosonio looked forward, with
and exultation, to so worthy a suc-
ır of their beloved master, who
emplated the opening virtues of his
with all the pride and tenderness of
ating parent.
lontalva was less happy in his off-
ıg: proud, selfish, and untractable,
disposition of the young Stephano
ittered the happiness of his parents,
looked forward with terror to the
urity of those evil passions, which
her precept nor example could cor-
. He possessed however, from his

earliest years, a degree of hypocrisy th enabled him, in some degree, to veil h faults from his father's eyes, but h mother was more clear sighted; a frequently did she sigh in secret as s reflected upon the natural, and as s feared, incurable depravity of her son

Brought up together from their chil ish days, young D'Rosonio felt, partl from habit and partly from the natur goodness of his heart, the warmes friendship for his cousin; and Stephano was capable of feeling th smallest interest or affection for an human being it was for Fernando, whos lively regard and incessant acts of kind ness made some impression even on hi callous heart.

When Fernando was about fifteen as he was one day returning to hi father's palace from the habitation o Signor Montalva, he observed a youth nearly his own age, whose appearance bespoke the most extreme wretched- ness, stop at the gate of a house that

belonged (as Fernando knew) to an opulent merchant. The youth rang, and a porter answered him, who scarcely seemed to give him time to speak, when he closed the gate with rudeness in his face; the young man walked away, and D'Rosonio saw that the flush of indignation which overspread his cheek at this unworthy treatment, gave way the next moment to an ashy paleness; his eyes filled with tears, and he cast them to Heaven with an expression of despair that sensibly touched the heart of the young count. He followed the youth for some time in silence, for he hesitated how to accost him, at last, he said—

"You seem fatigued, have you much farther to go before you reach your home?"

"Alas! signor (replied the young man), I have no home; my unhappy parent and myself have indeed the shelter of a roof, but Heaven knows how soon we may be deprived of it."

His eyes filled with tears as he spok and Fernando exclaimed—

" No, you shall not be deprived it. I will provide you a home; n father will befriend you."

" May Heaven bless you, sign (cried the youth). Oh! not for m self, but for my dear parent, do I thai you; I am young, and might strugg with my ill fortune, but age, sickne and poverty join to oppress him. O how will he rejoice, that at the mome when we had resigned all hope, Heav sent us a friend. Will you, genero signor, allow my father the happiness thanking you ?'

D'Rosonio assented, and the you man led him to an abode that mig indeed be stiled the habitation wretchedness. The lower order of t Neapolitans live in a state of abje poverty, which Fernando had no id of: his father's vassals enjoyed from t benevolence of Count D'Rosonio, i the decent comforts of life, and

shuddered when he entered the miserable habitation of Camillo Schedoni.

Stretched on a couch at the further end of the room into which Camillo conducted Fernando, lay an emaciated old man, who, in a tone, the hollowness of which startled D'Rosonio; asked, "Is it you Camillo, what says your uncle?"

"He would not see me, dear father (replied the youth), but thank Heaven, we have found that humanity from a stranger that he denies to show to his own flesh and blood, Providence has sent this generous signor to our assistance."

The old man tried to turn round; he raised his eyes, and surveyed D'Rosonio with earnestness.

"You are very young, signor (said he), and at your age to be alive to the duties of humanity, shows a good and feeling heart; accept the thanks and blessing of a poor old man, and believe

that your benevolence will not be ill bestowed."

"That I do indeed believe (cried Fernando), and if (as I conjecture), unexpected and unmerited misfortune has reduced you to your present distressed situation, in my father, the Count D'Rosonio, you will find a powerful friend."

"Thousands have cause to bless the noble name of D'Rosonio (replied the old man), and most truly do I rejoice to think that the virtues of the sire will be continued in the son." "The worthy and distressed (said Fernando), never sought the protection of my father in vain. For the present take this (continued he, putting his purse into the youth's hand), and for every thing necessary for your future comfort, I will answer for my father."

He was then about to depart, but the old man begged so earnestly that he would hear the cause of the wretchedness he had so generously relieved, that

he complied; and the father of Camillo related his simple tale.

"The merchant, at whose door you this day saw my son supplicate in vain for admittance, signor, is my brother"—

"Good heaven! (cried Fernando), and does he then know your actual situation? does he know"—(that you are perishing for want, he was about to add, but motives of delicacy induced him to suppress the latter part of his speech: young as D'Rosonio was, the natural nobleness of his temper revolted at the thought of wounding the object of his benevolence, even by a word.—How few, how very few are there, who possess this intuitive delicacy of sentiment! and how often is the meed that benevolence bestows rendered little, by the ungracious manner in which it is given!)

But to return: "Yes, signor, he does indeed know that I am sinking under the pressure of calamity (said the old man), and though in the possession of riches which he does not want and can-

not enjoy, yet he refuses to relieve the distresses of an only brother.

"My name, signor, is Camillo Schedoni, and my father was a merchant of some eminence; myself, and my brother who is two years younger, were his only children, and as he intended us for his own profession, he spared no expence, as we grew up, to initiate us in all the mysteries of commerce. Naturally industrious and of an active disposition, my attention to business rendered me my father's favourite, and this preference my brother never forgave. While we were yet young, our parent died, and bequeathed his fortune in equal proportions between us. Attached to and expert in trade I continued to traffic, but my brother declined remaining with me, and quitted Naples. He went to Rome, and there married a woman whose fortune was superior to his own; he returned with her to Naples, and for some time he lived in a stile of luxury and extravagance ill befitting his situation

in life. I used the privilege of a brother, and remonstrated with him on his conduct; but he heard me with indifference, and replied in a manner that proved my admonitions were far from welcome: from that time we became almost strangers, and my marriage soon after totally divided us.

"My wife was of humble birth, and unblest with the gifts of fortune; but her heart was good, and her temper gentle and affectionate. The haughty wife of my brother, however, treated her with contempt; and as I was resolved not to suffer her a second time to be insulted, all intercourse between us ceased.

"Providence blessed my industry, and I saw myself in possession of every comfort, and gifted with the means of being serviceable to my fellow-creatures.

"My brother's mode of life, as I had foretold, soon involved him in difficulties, and in a short time he was reduced almost to indigence; hurt as I had been by his behaviour, yet I could not forget

that he was my brother, and I strain my credit to the utmost to serve him my wife, too, overlooked the contem tuous treatment that she had receiv from her sister-in-law, and endeavour by the kindest attentions to alleviate t sorrows which that vain and unfeelin woman had brought upon herself.

"Grown wiser by misfortune, my br ther now sedulously applied himself t business, and in a short time his affai began to wear a prosperous appearance Heaven knows how sincerely I rejoiced i his good fortune, and he hypocritical pretended to feel the warmest gratitud for what I had done, and to ascribe hi success solely to my advice and assist ance: but while I saw with pleasure tha he daily throve more and more, I found that, by one of those vicissitudes which unfortunately occur but too frequently amongst commercial men, my cre dit received a shock: I recovered it, however, and for some time I proceeded as formerly.

" But I was destined to meet with severe trials: my wife, who had been the soother of every care, died; and this blow was for a time more than I could bear. My boy was too young to be sensible of his loss, or to be of service to me, but I committed my affairs to the care of my brother, and I resigned myself wholly to the indulgence of a grief, which I found it was in vain to try to conquer.

" For some time, absorbed in sorrow, I heeded not how my business proceeded; nor did I rouse from my lethargy 'till it was too late—'till I was ruined. Oh, signor, what were my feelings when the truth burst upon me! when I found that I had been a victim to a brother's malice and duplicity, and that myself and two helpless children (this youth, then ten years old, and a girl two years younger), were reduced by him to beggary!

" The malignant pleasure with which he announced to me the state of my affairs, first opened my eyes to his treachery; and when I asked the assistance

which, as a brother, I had a right to demand, the vague and frivolous manner in which it was refused, convinced me that I was his victim, and that all hope from him was vain. Too proud to complain, I bore my misfortunes in silence; and as his wife offered to take the charge of my children, I hoped that industry would enable me, after some time, to procure bread for them and for myself.

"It was however my lot to drain the cup of poverty even to the very dregs; my brother's conduct influenced others, and every where I was treated with unkindness.

"'Why do not you apply to your brother?' was the reply of all those from whom I solicited assistance: he is rich and childless, doubtless 'he will enable you again to enter life with credit.'

"Alas! so far from serving me, he strove to embitter my situation; my son was accustomed to hear him daily speak of the imprudence of my conduct: I had charged Camillo never to notice

these speeches, but childhood is not the season of dissimulation, and my affectionate boy dared to resent the calumnies with which he heard his father loaded.

"'What!' cried my brother, 'do you presume to insult the man to whom you are indebted for bread? base, ungrateful wretch! leave my house, and seek protection from the beggar whom you so insolently defend.'

"My son waited not to hear this cruel mandate a second time repeated; with a heart bursting with grief and indignation, he quitted the house of his uncle and came to me.

"I saw by his countenance that something had happened, and I dreaded to enquire what it was.

"'Father (cried he, bursting into tears), I am come to you; I am old enough now to work for you, and I will; yes, father (continued he), you shall have bread, if the labour of your son can procure it for you.'

"I pressed my poor boy in my arms and I mingled my tears with his; could not avoid grieving, to think tha he should share my unhappy lot, and would have made him return to hi uncle, but this he positively refused.

"'No (cried he), if I had offende him, I would ask his pardon on m knees; but never will I solicit it fo having taken the part of my father.'

"From that time, signor, which i two years since, to the present, I hav been uniformly unfortunate; and, t crown all my miseries, a long fit of il ness has reduced me to the state of abje misery in which you now see me. Fea ful that my daughter would incur th fate of her brother, I have wholly de prived myself of the sight of her, an charged her, on pain of my severe dis pleasure, never to come near me; with tears and supplications, my poor child besought me to recall my words, bu prudence compelled me to steel my heart against her intreaties, and I hav not seen her for some time.

Despair induced me to hazard an application to my brother; you, signor, were a witness of its ill success, and to your generosity I owe that relief which he has so unfeelingly denied me: may Heaven repay your kindness a thousand-fold!"

He ceased, and the young count again repeated his promise of further assistance, and returned to his father's palace.

CHAP. VI.

THE story of Camillo was most feelingly told by Fernando, and the count highly approved of his son's generosity: the fortunes of the poor old man were soon re-established on a more secure footing, and his young benefactor enjoyed the greatest delight in having restored a whole family from misery and want to competence and happiness. Camillo had taken his daughter home, and frequently did he bless the noble youth whose generosity had restored her to him, to be the comfort of his age: she was at this time little more than a child, but her opening

loveliness gave a rich promise of beauty in her maturer years.

The life of D'Rosonio had from his union with Clementina been one continued scene of happiness; but the time approached that was to deprive him of the most exquisite felicity, and to convince him that happiness is a fugitive upon earth. The health of Clementina had for some time been upon the decline, but the physicians who attended her had not thought her symptoms alarming, and the natural mildness and gentleness of her temper made her suffer with the most uncomplaining sweetness.

She was not however destined to suffer long; her angelic spirit was suddenly called from this world to one for which it was indeed a fit inhabitant, and where her virtues would meet with a bright and unfading reward.

Her death was indeed a severe blow to her doating husband, for it was one for which he was wholly unprepared;

he endeavoured to struggle with hi grief, and he called in the aid of reaso and religion to enable him to bear th destruction of his earthly happiness but though he submitted without a mur mur to the divine will, yet he could no subdue the keenness of feelings tha preyed upon his life, and gradually undermined a constitution naturally good.

The death of his mother had bee sensibly felt by Fernando, and with th most pious solicitude did he endeavou to soothe the sorrows of his remaining parent; but the barbed arrow had sunk too deep for the hand of filial piety to extract it, and in less than a year the Count D'Rosonio breathed his last, in the arms of his son.

The splendid inheritance which this event bestowed upon Fernando was no consolation to his feeling heart for the loss of a beloved parent; and but for the attentions of Montalva, and his second mother (as he used to call the Signora

Montalva), the grief of D'Rosonio might have been attended with the most fatal consequences.

They indeed lavished upon him every consolation that friendship could bestow; both had deeply regretted the death of the count and his lady, and both were as fondly attached to him as to their own son; frequently did they in secret wish that Stephano possessed his virtues; but little tendency to good appeared in the disposition of young Montalva, and a circumstance that occurred about this time, convinced the signora that his heart was worse than she had supposed.

The behaviour of Stephano, notwithstanding his father's remonstrances, and his mother's intreaties, had always been severe and haughty to their domestics; in particular, a venerable old man, whose whole life had been spent in the family of Montalva, had frequently been much hurt at the unfeeling insolence of the young signor, when all at once a change

took place in his manner, that delighted and astonished old Pedro. He became gracious, and condescending to excess. Strongly attached to the family of Montalva, the old man hoped to end his days in it, and he exulted in the thought that young Montalva, whom spite of all his faults, he loved with the fondest affection, was at last likely to correct the defects of his temper and to resemble his amiable father.

But the change which had gained him such credit in the eyes of Pedro, was occasioned by the most unworthy motives; the old man had a young and lovely granddaughter, on whose opening beauties Montalva had cast the eye of licentious desire, and it was solely from a wish to insinuate himself into the favour of Lauretta, that he changed his manners to her grandfather.

He found indeed no difficulty in gaining the affections of the pretty and simple Lauretta, who utterly unconscious of the ruin which she was about to

bring upon herself, felt highly gratified at the notice of the young signor; and more from natural weakness of intellect than any passion for Montalva, or any decided depravity of character, she readily surrendered her honour to his licentious wishes.

Naturally of the most inconstant disposition, Montalva was soon satiated with the person of Lauretta, pretty and attractive as it was; and he became sensible of his imprudence, in engaging in an intrigue, that if known would ruin him with his father. Guilty pleasures are dearly bought, and the young libertine, though proof to remorse, was sufficiently tormented by anxiety, as to the consequences of his fault. While matters were in this situation, Lauretta had an offer of marriage from a domestic of the count's, but full of the idea that Stephano's love and constancy would be eternal, she rejected it with scorn. Feminine vanity induced her to acquaint Montalva with her new conquest,

and he, seeing in an instant the adva
tages that he would derive from a ma
riage that would rid him of all his fe
for the future, insisted upon her acce
tance of Lodovic's hand. For so
time she obstinately refused complian
but terrified by the threats of Stepha
she at length consented, and the Signo
Montalva, who had always been part
to the girl, presented her with her we
ding cloaths, and a small portion. L
dovic was a favourite servant of D'Ro
nio's, and his munificent spirit led h
to provide handsomely for the you
couple. Lodovic doated upon his bri
and had Montalva possessed the small
degree of honour or humanity, Laure
might have ended her days in hap
obscurity, but convinced that all dan
of discovery was over, Stephano's inc
nation for her person revived, and t
weak and guilty woman was but t
easily persuaded to a renewal of th
connection.

But at the moment that they su

posed themselves most secure, accident betrayed to Lodovic the injury that they had done him. Though humble in station, the feelings of this unhappy man were keenly alive to the destruction of his domestic peace, and had he been armed at the moment that he surprised the guilty pair, the life of Montalvo might have paid the forfeit of his crime. Lauretta threw herself at the feet of her husband, but he spurned her from him, and hastily quitting his habitation flew to relate to Pedro his granddaughter's infamy. The poor old man was horror-struck at the news; that the son of his beloved master should thus poison the little remnant of his days, was a severe aggravation of what he suffered, and he betrayed the affair to the Signora Montalva.

Deeply was the heart of that excellent woman wounded by the knowledge of her son's crimes, and she shuddered when she reflected on the hardness of heart that could have prompted him to

the commission of so great an enormity; both herself and Montalva had a particular value for Pedro, whose sincere, though humble attachment, as well as his long services, made them consider him rather as a humble friend than a domestic. Frequently did the old man boast that three generations of the family of Montalva he had carried in his arms; and he hoped e're he closed his eyes in peace to see the fourth.

Poor old man thought the signora, little didst thou think that thy peace would be destroyed by a descendant of that house to which thou wert so fondly attached.

Determined, before she acquainted her husband with the affair, to learn all the particulars of it; the signora went to the habitation of Lauretta; there all was confusion and distress; Lodovic had absented himself, and his wife feared that he had in the first transports of his grief laid violent hands upon his life; terrified at the consequences of her

crime, the wretched woman made a full confession of all her guilt to the signora, and thus placed the conduct of Stephano in the blackest point of view.

The grief and indignation of Montalva at his son's depravity were equal; for the venial transgressions of youth, the signor would have made ample allowance, but the crime of Stephano was neither to be excused nor palliated, and Montalva sincerely regretted that he had ever given birth to such a monster.

That hypocrisy, which was a prominent *trait* in the character of Stephano, though it could not enable him to gloss over the affair to his parents, assisted him to impose upon the Count D'Rosonio, to whom he artfully criminated Lauretta in such a manner that the count was convinced much of the guilt lay at her door, and that the fault of Stephano was occasioned rather by passion and accident than any natural depravity.

To retain the friendship of the count, was indeed an object of moment to the

young Montalva; his father's fortune was very moderate, and his allowance for his rank was small. Notwithstanding the friendship which had subsisted between the father of Stephano and the late Count D'Rosonio, the signor had never been in a pecuniary way obliged to his friend; his lofty spirit could not bear the weight of obligation, and though he might at all times have commanded the purse of D'Rosonio, yet, he preferred living within the bounds of his own fortune, moderate as it was.

Sprung from one of the noblest families in Spain, and inheriting a portion of Spanish pride, the Signora Montalva's natural haughtiness and independence of spirit, even surpassed her husband's; and she laboured by the strictest attention to the economy of her household, to support that appearance which the signor's birth required him to make.

But though in many respects proud and haughty to excess, yet the young Montalva did not inherit that indepen-

dent spirit, which characterized his parents; fond of expensive pleasures, he disdained not to owe the means of procuring them to the bounty of his cousin, whose favours were bestowed with a grace and generosity peculiar to himself; and who in the warmth of his heart, saw nothing mean in the demands which Stephano daily made upon his purse.

The young friends were now both nearly nineteen, and both were largely indebted to nature. Tall, graceful, and symmetrical, the finely-proportioned figure of D'Rosonio, excited admiration in every beholder; while the matchless regularity of his features, the benevolence of his smiles, and the sparkling animation of his dark and brilliant eye, gave him the fullest claim to manly beauty.

Stephano was not less handsome than his friend, but his countenance had a disgusting expression of haughtiness, which when it disfigures the features of youth is peculiarly unpleasing; and

which when contrasted with the openness and affability of D'Rosonio, made him appear to very great disadvantage.

The virtues of the Count D'Rosonio amply compensated to his domestics and his vassals for the loss of his noble father; nor was he forgetful of Camillo Schedoni, who had been the object of his youthful benevolence, and who by the generosity of his late father was enabled amply to provide for his family a visit to the house of Camillo was a treat which D'Rosonio often allowed himself, and with the warmest delight did the old man and his children welcome their benefactor; the young Camillo who had embraced his father's profession of a merchant, had a most advantageous offer to settle in Spain, which his filial piety alone, made him decline.

Camillo related the circumstance to the count, and then added, "thanks to your late noble father and yourself, my lord, I have no actual occasion to sepa-

rate myself from my son; but I must not suffer a selfish regard to my own comforts, to interfere with his happiness and prosperity; he will most probably soon accumulate a fortune in Spain, and in his hands riches will be a blessing to many; I must therefore for his sake reconcile myself to his absence, and I shall be the better able to bear it from the reflection that I have performed my duty."

His daughter Victoria was present, and at the mention of her brother's departure, her soft eyes filled with tears; she tried to conceal them and to force a smile into her countenance, but she could not succeed, and she hastily left the room to conceal her agitation.

"Poor Victoria, (said her father,) she will sensibly feel the absence of her brother, to whom she is warmly attached; but she will be my comforter and in return I must be her's."

In a short time after this conversation, the young man left Naples for

Spain. When he waited upon the cou to take his leave, D'Rosonio warm wished him that prosperity which l deserved, and slipped into his han what he called a small token of frien ship; it was in truth a magnifice present; and Camillo would have d clined it.

"I must be allowed the privilege a friend, Camillo (said D'Rosoni in assisting you to enter life with cor fort; I insist then that you accept th trifle, without scruple." Camillo obe ed his benefactor, on whose head whe he took his leave, he invoked the choice blessings of heaven. The natural kind ness of D'Rosonio's heart led him when the young man was gone, to b more frequent in his visits than h had before been to Schedoni's, bu these visits, which sprung from th most amiable motives, had nearly prove fatal to his own peace; the person o Victoria, who was two years younge than himself, was cast in nature's faires mould, and her mind was a fit inhabi

tant of its lovely tenement; mild, susceptible, and affectionate, the gentler virtues were all her own. The only material defect in her character, was want of firmness, and that, to a young and lovely female, is often the most dangerous of all others.

This peculiar softness of temper led her deeply to regret the absence of her brother, whom she loved with more than a sister's fondness; and from the most benevolent motives D'Rosonio endeavoured to console her.

One day when he had been conversing with her upon the subject, he said, "If for the present you have lost one brother, you have gained another; if you will accept of my fraternal regard." "I shall think myself both honoured, and happy in your lordship's friendship," replied the blushing and delighted Victoria.

But alas! friendship was too cold a name for the sentiment which the count

soon inspired her with; and young and susceptible as D'Rosonio was, it cannot be wondered at that their passion became mutual: yet, both were for some time unconscious of its existence, and so they would probably have long remained, but for an incident that opened the eyes of both to the nature of their sentiments.

A young man the son of an opulent merchant, was captivated by the beauty of Victoria, and asked her hand from her father. Wholly unsuspicious that the heart of his daughter was not in her own possession, Camillo readily promised the young suitor his consent and interest with his child, whose affections he said he knew were disengaged; and highly pleased with the proposed alliance, he took the earliest opportunity of mentioning it to Victoria.

"The young D'Arfet has just been with me, (said he to her), you have seen him my love, what think you of him?

"He appears a good and ingenuous young man, (replied she), and was my brother's favourite."

"His circumstances are good, (said her father), and he is now of an age to settle in the world; he wishes to do so, if he can obtain the hand of my Victoria."

Camillo fixed his eyes upon his daughter as he spoke: he was surprised to see the colour forsake her cheek, and the next moment she burst into tears.

"Why this agitation my beloved girl? (cried the fond parent), you know that your choice shall be governed by your own inclinations; never will I force my Victoria to give her hand where her heart cannot accompany the precious gift."

He threw his arms round the weeping girl, and kissed away the tears that trembled upon her cheek.

"Oh, my father! my dear father, (cried she), how happy have you made your child; indeed, indeed, I should be

miserable if I thought that you wished me to marry this man."

"Your affections my Victoria, I know are disengaged, and I should have been happy to see them so worthily bestowed but we will not now pursue the subject."

Victoria soon after retired to her chamber, her father's words vibrated upon her ear; "Your affections I know are disengaged." She trembled as she repeated them to herself. Oh, heaven, thought she, can it be, that the affection I have hitherto indulged without scruple is of a nature that I ought to blush at? Can I have had the weakness to cherish a passion for a man every way my superior?

The pang that rent her heart at this thought, was a sufficient confirmation that her fears were too just; that heart, equally gentle and pure, had indeed imbibed a passion the most fatal to her repose.

Accident prevented the count from visiting the habitation of Camillo for some days, and in that short time the uneasiness of her mind had occasioned a visible change in the looks of Victoria. D'Rosonio was shocked to see her pale and languid; her cheek flushed as he entered the room, but the burning crimson that suffused her lovely countenance as her eyes met his, gave place the next moment to an ashy paleness.

The count hastily inquired whether she was indisposed, and received a reply in the negative. "What then has happened to distress you, dearest Victoria? for something has I am convinced," cried D'Rosonio.

The soothing tenderness of his tone, penetrated the heart of Victoria, and not daring to trust herself longer with him, she made an excuse for her absence and quitted the apartment.

In a few minutes her father entered, and from him D'Rosonio eagerly de-

manded the cause of that distress, so visible in his daughter's countenance.

"In truth, my lord, (replied Camillo), I know not what has deprived Victoria of her cheerfulness; but for some days past, she has indulged a melancholy that afflicts me; our neighbour D'Arfet has viewed her with partial eyes, and though he might aspire to a richer bride, he sought from me the hand of Victoria; but she refused to listen to his suit, nor would I cross her inclinations; not for the wealth of world would I see my child unhappy, and know myself the cause; but though I explicitly told her so, yet, from that time she has pined, and every hour seems to increase her dejection."

The words of Camillo gave to the heart of Fernando the most painful sensation it had ever experienced; he felt that he loved, and he recollected a thousand little circumstances that convinced him he was beloved; but the

transport, that had he been differently situated, would have accompanied such a conviction, was destroyed by the bitter remembrance of the insurmountable bars to his union with Victoria, and he sunk into a reverie that was unnoticed by Camillo.

"Your lordship has so kindly interested yourself for me, and mine, (continued the old man), that I know you will forgive my presumption in requesting one more favour. I think that the fear of making me unhappy, notwithstanding my assurances to the contrary, has rendered Victoria so melancholy; if you would condescend to assure her, that could I see her cheerfulness return, my felicity would be complete; your words would I know have weight with her: may I, my lord, hope that you will grant me this request?"

"Most readily, (replied the count), but not to-day, you shall see me soon again, and then, (added he, with a sigh),

we will try what can be done to restore the mind of Victoria to peace.

He interrupted the acknowledgments of Camillo, whom he quitted with a mind more disturbed than he chose to own, even to himself.

CHAP. VII.

The various emotions which he dared not indulge, and which he could not repress, robbed D'Rosonio for that night of repose; fancy pictured to him the happiness which he might enjoy in a union with Victoria.

"What! though her birth is humble (thought he), yet her virtues and her graces would add lustre to any rank; and shall I deprive myself of the possession of a woman so formed to render me happy, merely in compliance with prejudices which I ought to despise?" But when he asked himself

whether his father, his beloved and r
vered father, would, were he livin
consent to his marriage with Victori
he was compelled to own that such
union would never have received h
sanction: he recollected the admon
tion he had received from the la
count:

"When you marry, my son, l
wealth be your least consideration; yc
are rich enough to support the digni
of your house; seek only for a woma
whose virtues and whose birth will r
flect lustre upon your choice."

Often had Fernando promised
his father implicit obedience on th
point. "And does his death (thoug
he) exonorate me from my promis
Oh! no. It renders the performan
of it a sacred duty. Yes, dear sha
of my revered father, solemnly do
swear never to forget that injuncti
you have so often laid upon me."

Severely did he now blame hims
for that intercourse, innocent as it w

that had given rise to those sentiments so destructive to the peace of Victoria and himself. He took a retrospective view of his behaviour to her, and the idea that she supposed he meant to offer her his hand occurred to him. 'Twas true, nothing that had ever passed between them could have given her reason for such a thought; but he was sensible that he loved her, and if she had perceived his passion, what must she have thought of the avidity with which he sought her society. After some hours of painful reflection, he resolved to endeavour without wounding the delicacy of Victoria, to erase from her mind any idea that he entertained more than a paternal regard for her.

"Yes, Victoria (thought he), I will indeed be a brother to thee; and, oh! may thy happiness equal my fervent wishes; blest, supremely blest, will then be thy lot."

"The sooner this was done (thought he) the better, for the health and tran-

quillity of Victoria; and in a few d
afterwards he went to the house of (
millo. He found Victoria alone, a
he rejoiced to see that she looked be
than when they had last met.

For some moments the behaviour
both was constrained; but D'Roso
endeavoured, by plunging at once i
the subject of his visit, to remove
embarrassment under which they
boured.

His voice faultered when he percei
the evident agitation with which V
toria listened to him; and when
ceased, she strove in vain to reply.

"Will not my sister speak to me
said the count, taking her cold a
trembling hand in his.

"I am sensible of your goodne
my lord (replied she), indeed I a
but just now I cannot thank you as
ought."

"Do not talk thus formally to n
Victoria (said the count); regard me
your friend, as your brother."

"Oh! would to heaven (cried she) that you were indeed my brother; how blest should I have been, and how different would my feelings be, if——". She paused; but enough had escaped to dye her lovely countenance with crimson, and she hastily averted it from the ardent gaze of the count.

Shocked at what she had said, her agitation became excessive, and unable to restrain her emotions, she burst into tears. With the most soothing gentleness, D'Rosonio endeavoured to console her.

"Oh, my lord (cried she) speak not thus kindly to me—I know, I feel that you must despise me. Weak, unhappy creature that I am."

"Despise thee, dearest Victoria? (said the count, thrown off his guard by the softness of her tone). No; Heaven is my witness how dear you are to me; and was it in my power to call you mine, I should esteem myself the happiest of men."

long and severe were her struggles, but they were ultimately successful.

D'Rosonio was convinced that for him the only chance of safety was in flight, and he quitted Naples for a short time. To give up the pleasure which the society of Victoria afforded him, caused him indeed a painful effort; but it was one that every principle of honour and prudence demanded him to make, and never had he been deaf to their suggestions.

He made an excursion to Rome, in which he was accompanied by Stephano, who was happy in escaping from a home that was now become particularly unpleasant to him. Lodovico had never been heard of since he fled in consequence of his wife's infidelity; and old Pedro had from that time drooped, till at last he had sunk into the grave. His death, even depressed as he was with the weight of years, would have been regretted by the signor and his lady; but when they re-

flected that their son had most probably hastened it, their feelings were doubly keen. Stephano would have been perfectly unmoved at the decease of the old man, whose life or death was not in his eyes of consequence; but the coldness, and even severity with which he found himself treated by his parents, who were shocked at his evident want of feeling, rendered him anxious to escape from their presence for some time.

Lauretta had, upon the death of her grandfather, been placed by the signora in a secure and humble asylum; she appeared very penitent for her crime, and to penitence the heart of Signora Montalva was at all times accessible, She did not reproach the unhappy girl for the past; she only exacted from her a solemn promise to avoid future errors; and grateful for kindness, where she had expected only to meet with reproach, Lauretta readily

made, and solemnly kept the pron
which her benefactress desired.

The gaieties of Rome soon cha
all care and gloom from the mind
Montalva. Free from all restraint,
liberally supplied by the count v
the means of indulging his natural
pensity to pleasure, he soon bec
distinguished amongst the gay and
sipated, and frequently laughed at
cousin, whose gravity he asserted
inconsistent with his years.

The pursuits of D'Rosonio were
deed widely dissimilar; not that
wholly turned from the cup of pleas
but he quaffed the intoxicating bever
with moderation, nor did the morn
ever bring him cause to reproach h
self for the excesses of the night.

The fairest and the noblest of
Roman dames, did not disdain to
tinguish the cousins; but the reme
brance of Victoria acted as a talisn
in steeling the heart of the count,

the brightest eyes in Italy strove to pierce it in vain.

Licentious amours only had charms for Montalva; and with them he was too much engrossed to have leisure, or indeed inclination for any others. Devoid of delicacy, and a slave to sensual appetite, the most celebrated courtezans of Rome were by turns his favorites. D'Rosonio would have expostulated with him on his conduct, but delicacy sealed his lips: he had supplied Montalva with money, and he feared that remonstrance from him might appear to his cousin impertinent or ill-judged.

Stephano therefore pursued with avidity his career of dissipation, when an event happened that for some time put a stop to it. This was the illness of the elder Signor Montalva, in consequence of which Stephano received a summons to return home.

Greatly shocked at the illness of Montalva, whom he loved and revered as a second father, the count accom-

panied his cousin back to Nap
When they arrived, they hastened
the signor, but the countenance of
domestic who received them destro
the hope that D'Rosonio had ent
tained of his friend's recovery; M
talva was indeed yet alive, but h
was extinct.

Stephano heard this intelligence w
affected dejection, but in reality he v
far from grieved. Tenderly affecti
ate as the behaviour of the count had e
been to him, Stephano did not love
father; their characters were inde
totally dissimilar. Frank, open, a
unsuspecting, the elder Montalva v
in the truest sense of the word a go
man; and hypocrisy, which formed
striking a *trait* in the character of t
son, was of all vices the most oppos
to the open and noble nature of t
father. The detection of Stephan
intrigue with Lauretta, though it cou
not wholly destroy Montalva's affecti
for his son, yet in a great measure l

sened it; and the naturally vindictive temper of Stephano was roused to its utmost pitch of acrimony, by what he thought the unnecessary severity of his father's behaviour at that time.

To his son therefore, the death of Montalva would be a source of pleasure, rather than regret; but veiling these reflections under an assumed sorrow, he hastened to his father's apartment; as Montalva had desired to see him the moment he arrived.

Unfeeling as he was, Stephano received a momentary shock from the appearance of his father, on whose countenance death had evidently set his seal; the Signora Montalva sat by the bedside of her husband, and held one of his hands in her's; the other Montalva feebly extended to his son; Stephano pressed it to his lips.

"I rejoice that I am spared to see you once more my son, (cried Montalva,) I have much to say to you."

"Not once but many times more,

my father, heaven will yet restore yo to our prayers, said Stephano.

"Do not deceive yourself, (replie his father), I have an internal monitc that tells me I am hastening to the tomb Clara, my beloved, (cried he, turning t the signora, whose tears flowed in silence,) repress this grief, my life I trust has not been wholly unworthy of the angelic purity of thine, and in that blessed abode which will doubtless be the reward of thy virtues, we shall I hope meet again."

The signora gave her beloved husband a look that seemed to say their meeting would not be long delayed; and Stephano observed with surprise the ravages that grief had made in her still lovely countenance. She was pale and thin, and the fire that had once sparkled in her brilliant black eye was almost extinguished by tears.

Stephano listened with feigned humility to the long and pathetic remonstrance which his father made on his

former conduct; and readily promised that his future life should be such as would reflect honour upon his illustrious descent.

"Oh, my son, (cried the signor,) never forget the lesson that this day affords you, never forget that a life of virtue leads to a death of peace. What at that aweful moment are all the riches and honours of the world; the recollection of the good we have performed is thus our only comfort, and bitter indeed must be the feelings of the unhappy man, who has to reproach himself with an ill-spent life; to such a one, the misery of a death bed, is a dreadful anticipation of the punishment that awaits the wicked conscience, whose voice had been stifled by wordly pleasures; it then paints to the expiring sinner in the most glowing colours those enormities of which he has been guilty, and that good which he might have done: Oh! my son, most fervently does your father im-

plore of heaven, that your last moment may be free from terrors such a these."

Montalva was obliged to pause, fo his strength was almost exhausted; h desired after he had had a little repose, t see the Count D'Rosonio, whom he loved with the affection of a father; with the deepest regret D'Rosonio witnessed the change which so short a time had made; he listened with reverence to the signor, whose advice to him was brief; of D'Rosonio indeed, he had no more to desire than a perseverance in his present conduct, for well did Montalva know, and truly did he value the virtues of the count.

"Your father and myself (said he), were in the truest sense of the word friends, and it was his wish, as it is mine, that our children should be united in bonds of the strictest amity; Stephano has neither your stability nor your strictness of principle; your friendship

may be a means of rendering him happy and virtuous."

"And never shall it be withdrawn, (cried the count); Stephano has been, and always shall be, the brother of my heart; but was he less dear to me, yet your desire should be complied with; believe me dear signor, that the injunction of my own respected father, would not have more weight with me than your's."

Montalva pressed the hand of his young friend, and then desired to be left to repose. "I feel myself drowsy, (said he), and a little sleep will perhaps enable me to see you and Stephano in the evening."

The count left him, and he sunk into a tranquil slumber; he slept for some hours. "His repose has been long, may it prove salutary, (said the signora, as she gently put aside the curtain to view him as he slept.) He lay apparently tranquil, and a placid smile adorned his countenance; but a second glance

convinced the signora that life was
for ever. Bitter was the grief of
unhappy wife, but she bore her aff
tion in silence, D'Rosonio omitted
consolation in his power to offer, a
Montalva behaved with outward af
tion and respect to his endowed moth
but the penetrating eye of the sign
saw through the heartless civilities
her son; saw and despised the moti
from whence they sprung, and his w
of filial piety, was no small aggravat
of her grief.

She was not destined long to lam
the loss of an adored husband; her hea
had for some time been bad, and t
death of her husband was a blow t
she never recovered; she gradua
declined, and as she was perfectly sen
ble of her situation, she anticipated w
pleasure the moment that was to un
her to her beloved Montalva; and
months after the death of the sign
she followed him to the grave.

Montalva though internally rejoic

at this event, assumed all the outward appearances of grief, and the warm-hearted D'Rosonio exerted himself to console his friend. The death of his parents had rendered him master of the whole of his small paternal property, but in his hands, it was as nothing. Naturally luxurious and extravagant, he had not the means to indulge these darling propensities, and the baneful voice of envy, at his cousin's superior fortune, began to take root in his heart: "yet, (said he) mentally, my descent is not inferior to D'Rosonios; a splendid marriage will enable me to restore the house of Montalva to its original splendour and magnificence, and amongst the Neapolitan fair ones, I may without difficulty, select a rich and noble bride."

Camillo Schedoni waited upon the Count D'Rosonio at this period one morning, to bid his benefactor farewell. His son had established himself most opulently in Spain, and the old man yielded to his entreaties, and agreed to

pass the remainder of his days with him. D' Rosonio had by this time conquered his love for Victoria, of whom he took leave with a brotherly affection; nor did his heart throb, as it would once have done, with pain, when he learned some sime after that she had given her hand to an opulent Spaniard; most sincerely did he invoke heaven to bless their union, and his prayers were heard; for the lot of Victoria was as happy as she had deserved it should be.

CHAP. VIII.

Soon after D'Rosonio had attained his twenty-third year, Montalva one morning burst into his chamber.

"Congratulate me, (cried he in a tone of rapture), the loveliest and most affluent woman in Naples will be mine.

"I do congratulate thee my friend, (said D'Rosonio, warmly embracing him), but may I not know thy fair one's name?"

"Bianca Lupinetti, (replied the signor); thou knowest she is the only surviving branch of one of the noblest families in Naples, and her fortune which is immense is at her own disposal: that for-

warm, and perhaps a useful friend; on thing I must caution you against, d not attempt to watch or follow me; you do, you will never see me more she walked hastily away before I coul reply.

"I puzzled myself in vain, to conjec ture who the incognita could be; an the next day I took care to be there a the same hour. In a few minutes th woman appeared.

"'You are punctuality itself, signor (said she) and to-night you shall se your incognita, be near the church o St. Giovanni a little before midnight and I will conduct you to her.'

"You may be sure Fernando, (con tinued Montalva), I did not hesitate t promise obedience; and never did I lon for the arrival of an hour, as I did fo that of midnight. At last it came, an just as the clock was striking, my inco nita's ambassadress approached me 'Follow me,' said she; I obeyed, an for some time we proceeded in silence

she then turned round. 'We are now very near the place to which I am about to conduct you, signor, (cried she), suffer me to tie this handkerchief over your eyes. I hesitated. 'Nay, (cried she) on no other condition can you accompany me. These words were sufficient; I suffered her to tie the handkerchief round my eyes, and she then led me forward. In a few minutes she unbound them, and I found myself in a large garden opposite to a magnificent house; my conductress took from her pocket a key, and opening the door of the house, she led me up a flight of back stairs to a small apartment; we had no light but what the moon afforded.

"'Stay here for a few minutes, signor, (said she) and I will return to you:' she quitted the room as she spoke, and I observed that she locked the door after her; I had not time to indulge many conjectures upon this circumstance: a slight noise made me turn to that part of the apartment from whence I thought

it proceeded; I saw a pannel slide back and by doing so, discovered to me most magnificent apartment, splendidly illuminated; the woman who had brought me there, now entered through the pannel; she motioned to me to follow her, and I obeyed: but the magnificence of every thing around me, had no longer power to attract my attention when I beheld the loveliest female figure my eyes had ever seen, advance to meet me; a long veil which fell in folds to her feet, while it concealed from me her countenance, gave additional graces to her figure; tall, majestic, and commanding; the graceful symmetry of her person could not be excelled; while the feminine delicacy of her air and manner, would alone have been sufficient to excite admiration.

"We conversed for some time before she would suffer me to see her face; at last, she raised her veil; and what a heaven of beauty met my eyes. I gazed upon her in speechless transport

her attendant's entrance prevented my expressing the admiration with which she had inspired me; the woman whispered to her and she then said to me.—

"'For the present I must bid you farewell.'

"But may I not hope to be allowed to see you again' cried I

"'Yes, (said she), in a few days.' I supplicated for a shorter period, and received permission to come again on the following night. Flora her confidant, who had before conducted me, was to meet me at the church of——and with this permission, I was obliged to retire; totally ignorant of the name or rank of my fair enslaver. Her woman led me again into the garden, and bound my eyes. In a short time I found myself near the church where we had met.

"'And now, signor, (cried Flora), adieu 'till to-morrow night.'

"Stop a moment (said I,) may I not ask——

" 'What you please to-morrow night, signor (cried she), but now I must away.'

"She left me as she spoke, and I hastened home. I retired to bed, but I courted repose in vain.— Thou knowest, Fernando, that I have hitherto thought but lightly of the sex; and often have I sworn never to part with my liberty: yet I saw clearly that this adventure, if pursued, must end in matrimony. True, such an angel, if possessed of wealth and birth, might render the fetters of hymen less galling than I had ever thought them; but might it not be all a cheat? Might she not have sought me out, to hide perhaps the disgraceful consequences of some amour in which she had been engaged? or"—

"Now, on my life, thou didst not deserve the generous confidence she placed in thee (cried D'Rosonio), how couldst thou indulge such mean suspicions of such a creature as thou describest her to be? For shame, Montalva!"

"D'Rosohio, thou wilt never know the sex; what thou termest suspicion, I call caution; but in this instance I will own it was unnecessary. To be brief, I saw my incognita again the following night, and three hours conversation made her appear if possible more lovely in my eyes. I ventured to express a wish to know who she was, but I did it guardedly.

"'I will be frank with you, Signor Montalva (said she); my rank is such as I need not blush to own, but at this moment I know not whether we can, after a few days, ever meet again.'

"Heavens! signora, (said I), can you be serious? Flattered as I have been with the hope that I was not an object of indifference to you, can you determine to give me up for ever?

"'Alas! (replied she), it does not depend upon myself whether we shall meet or not; but of this be assured, should I from circumstances be obliged

"I did not immediately reply; in trut I could not: lovely as I had befo thought her, she now appeared mo charming than ever; her dress heig tened her natural beauty, and her fi eyes, fixed on mine with an expressio of pleasure, robbed me for a moment o all command of myself, and I pressed th lovely creature to my bosom.

"She instantly disengaged herself 'Take care, signor (said she, in a ton of severity), or'——

"I did not suffer her to finish the sen tence; I besought her pardon, and sh granted it.

"'I perceive, signor (cried she), th my name and family are not unknow to you.'

"All Naples (returned I), are by r port informed of the Signora Lupinetti surpassing loveliness, both of mind an person.

"She bowed to my compliment, an proceeded:

"'I was still very young when deat

deprived me of both my parents; but the kindness of Signor D'Orsini, my guardian, left me little reason to lament their loss. The signor had an only son, of whom he was passionately fond; and well did Alberto merit his father's love: this youth and myself grew up together, and I loved him as a brother. A warmer sentiment, however, had imperceptibly stolen into his heart, and he owned to his father, that without me he would be miserable; my guardian, who knew that my heart was disengaged, had not a doubt but I would accept of his son's hand, and lost no time in communicating to me the affection with which Alberto regarded me. I had not then (continued she), felt the power of love.'

—Never, Fernando, shall I forget the look with which these words were uttered, nor the glance that accompanied them. She paused a moment, and then proceeded:

"'The regard which I was conscious

I felt for Alberto, was I thought sufficient for our mutual happiness, and I did not scruple to promise him my hand; but as his fortune was far inferior to mine, Signor D'Orsini refused to let the ceremony of our marriage be performed 'till his authority over me was at an end.'

"'Twill be said (cried he) that I have influenced your choice; and, dearly as I love my son, his happiness must not be purchased at the expence of his father's honour: in less than two years you will be your own mistress, should you then prefer my son, with what delight will I join your hands!' Alberto acquiesced in this delay, though with reluctance, and nearly a year passed away. My affection for him, calm, steady, and rational, seemed to myself incapable of increase or diminution; but this regard did not satisfy the warm and impassioned heart of Alberto; ever anxious to be near me, and unhappy if any accident separated

us, even for a short time; the proofs which he daily gave me of his passion were irksome rather than pleasing.

"'You do not love me, Bianca (would he frequently say); my presence creates no joy, and my absence gives no pain to your heart; your calmness, your tranquillity, are inconsistent with love; and I greatly fear, that to your regard for my father, and your friendship for me, I owe the promise of your hand. Oh, Bianca! was I sure of that, dearly as I love you, yet I would not call you mine; the possession of your lovely person, without your heart, could not satisfy me.'

"'In vain I assured him that the sentiment I felt for him was all I was capable of feeling, and that I was conscious it was amply sufficient for my happiness.

"'You do not know your own heart, Bianca (would he reply); it was made for a warmer sentiment.' These perpetual declarations, that I regarded him with indifference, made me look into

my heart, and I was compelled to own that, compared to his, my sentiments were cold; had he never appeared dissatisfied with the nature of my sentiments, I should not have suspected that the existence of more impassioned feelings were necessary to my felicity; but in giving me an idea that that was the case, he disturbed my tranquillity without increasing my regard for himself. While my mind was in this state my guardian died, and I removed from his house to that in which we are at present. Signora Valdorna, a woman of family but reduced fortune, gladly accepted the offer of residing with me; and I renewed my assurances to Alberto that, when decency permitted our union, my hand should be his. I could no longer suffer him to see me daily, as he had been accustomed to do; and to dissipate the grief which his father's death occasioned him, he left Naples for a short period. He took his leave of me with evident emotion, and I strove to

persuade myself that I saw him depart with regret, but I could not conceal from my own heart, that I felt as if I was now for the first time at liberty; and I shuddered when I reflected how inconsistent with real love such a sentiment was.

"'Soon after the departure of Alberto D'Orsino, I chanced, signor, to see you at the church of St. Giovanni: after what has passed (added she, blushing), I ought not perhaps to scruple owning that the first sight of you convinced me Alberto was right, when he declared that my heart was made for a warmer sentiment than the one I felt for him. Deeply did I now regret the engagement that I had formed; yet, when I thought of Alberto's declaration, I almost doubted whether I ought, prepossessed as I was in your favour, to marry him. I determined to see you, and if I found on conversing with you, that you were all that my fancy presaged, I thought I would at least make an effort to recover my liberty; but on the very

day after you had made your first
a letter from Alberto apprized me o
speedy return, and that he had rece
an appointment from our sovereign
foreign court; he besought me on
account to shorten his probation,
consent to accompany him.

" ' This was a severe and unexpe
blow, and I knew not what to res
upon. I had intended by degree
prepare the mind of Alberto for int
gence which I was conscious would
casion him the greatest pain; but
was now impossible, and I had no ch
but to marry him, or to abruptly inf
him of the alteration in my sentime
To be brief, he came. The agitatio
my mind, on seeing him, was too g
not to strike him forcibly, and
pressed to know the cause of it, whi
at last summoned resolution to tell h
I shall not attempt to paint to you
scene that ensued; the generous Alb
gave me back my liberty, and we pa
for ever.'

" She ceased, and I thanked her with transport for the preference that she had given me; she suffered me to remain with her an hour, and before my departure I received permission to visit her as her acknowledged lover. And now, Fernando, I again demand your congratulations; I had indeed intended never to marry, but a wife like Bianca is a rare treasure: wit, beauty, birth, and riches, all combine to render her desirable; and senseless must the man be that would reject such a prize.

CHAP. IX.

MONTALVA ceased, and D'Rosonio ag warmly congratulated him.

"Thou must see my Bianca, friend (cried he); my happiness will be complete 'till you know and este each other; and to-morrow I will j sent thee to her." Montalva now hur away, and left D'Rosonio to rumi on what he had heard.

Very different were the feelings w which the friends regarded the cond of Bianca; Montalva thought of noth but the preference which she gave himself, but D'Rosonio conceived t

her conduct was a violation of female delicacy, which he could not have approved of in his mistress.

"She thinks not of the pangs which she has inflicted upon the susceptible heart of D'Orsini (said the count, mentally); and for Montalva, a stranger of whom she knows nothing but from report, she breaks through an engagement that ought to be held most sacred; and this is the woman with whom he expects happiness: Alas! Montalva, greatly do I fear that thou wilt find thyself mistaken; but vain would be at present every effort to undeceive thee."

The next day Montalva presented his friend to Bianca, who received him in the most flattering manner.

"Count D'Rosonio, signora (said Montalva as he introduced Fernando), the friend of my youth and the brother of my heart, intreats the honor of being known to you; he is most anxious to merit a place in your esteem."

" If fame speaks truly of the Cour D'Rosonio, it is impossible to kno without esteeming him (said the signor as she extended to him her beautifi hand), and his being your friend, signo is a sufficient passport to my favour."

D'Rosonio made a suitable reply t this speech, and the conversation becam general. Montalva had not exaggerate when he spoke of the personal charms o Bianca; she was indeed beautiful, bu D'Rosonio thought that an air of ill concealed levity spoiled the effect of he charms; he did not however own hi opinion to Montalva; who, when the left her, dwelt with rapture upon he perfections.

Montalva now daily spent a portion of his time with the Signora Lupinetti, and D'Rosonio was often of the party. Montalva frequently pressed his lovely mistress to fix a time for their being united, but this she always declined, under one pretence or other. " Let us

e better known to each other, (she ould say), you have not yet had time o find out half my faults."

In vain did the enamoured Montalva protest that he should never be able to discover any; she would not say when she would bless him with her hand, and fearful of offending her, he did not chuse to be too pressing.

In the account that Bianca had given him of her contract to Signor D'Orsini, she had not adhered to truth; the violent passion which she pretended the signor felt for her never had existence: while she was his father's ward, D'Orsini had treated her as a sister, and so he would ever have considered her, but for a prepossession which she avowed in his favour. Bianca was of a temper the most inconstant; she fancied that she loved D'Orsini, and her passion made some impression upon his heart; his father, though he felt a regard for Bianca as the child of a deceased friend who had been very dear to him, yet would

not willingly have chosen her for daughter-in-law; he therefore wis the marriage to be deferred, and his acquiesced in his desire. No sooner Bianca become the affianced wife D'Orsini, than the natural inconsta of her temper prevailed, and she s regarded him with indifference. l passion for Montalva converted indi rence into disgust, and she determi to break her engagement to D'Ors The signor's pride and spirit rende this an easy matter; he interrupted excuses she was making for her perfi by an assurance that no excuse was cessary.

"As long as I had reason to supp that your hand would be accompan by your whole heart, signora (said coldly), I would have held the gift d as my own soul; but, far from repro ing, I thank you for the frank avo you have made, that I no longer pos your affections; I willingly resign title to your favour, and wish y

happy." He bowed as he spoke, and retired.

Happy as Bianca felt in her release from an engagement so irksome to her, yet her pride was deeply wounded by the manner in which her liberty was restored. D'Orsini did not however bear the disappointment so calmly as he affected to do; both his heart and his pride were hurt, but he disdained to let his perfidious mistress see her power, and he determined to seek refuge in flight. He quitted Naples almost immediately: this absence was peculiarly gratifying to Bianca, who lost no time in apprizing Montalva that she was at liberty.

"What dost thou think, Flora (said she to her woman, one night as she was undressing), of Signor Montalva's friend, the Count D'Rosonio; dost thou think him handsome?"

"Oh yes, signora (replied Flora), very handsome, though not as much so

(added she, recollecting herself), as t
Signor Montalva."

"Nay, Flora, there I think thou s
wrong; the Count D'Rosonio is a m
del of manly beauty: what grace
every motion! what spirit, yet wh
softness, in his dark brilliant eye! ar
when he smiles—didst thou ever ma
his smile, Flora?

The attendant was a moment witho
replying; she gazed with surprise o
Bianca, whose eyes sparkled with ple
sure as she spoke of D'Rosonio: sh
perceived the earnest gaze with whic
Flora regarded her, and she blushe
and became silent. After a pause of
few moments, she desired Flora to f
nish undressing her, and she retired t
bed.

The form of D'Rosonio haunted he
slumbers. "What, thought she, (alarm
ed at finding that she could not banis
him from her mind) what can thi
mean? Involuntarily she compared th

friends; and the comparison was in the count's favour.

"I must not, I dare not think thus," (cried she), and rising from her bed she threw on a light dishabille, and paced her apartment, in hopes that fatigue would obtain for her some sleep; but she was not successful, and the morning dawned before she closed her eyes.

Too certain of her regard for himself, to be very suspicious, the increasing coldness of Bianca's manner did not for some time strike Montalva; but every day increased her predilection for D'Rosonio, and her infatuation at last became so obvious, that the count, though perfectly free from vanity, perceived it. The discovery hurt him.

"What (thought he,) can this coquet mean by attentions so marked? Poor Montalva, would to heaven thou hadst never seen her." By degrees the count absented himself from the house of the signora, and her inquiries after

him, created in the breast of Montalva a suspicion of her inconstancy.

"I know not signora, (said he petulantly, in reply to some expressions of wonder she made use of at his absence) I know not what can have detained D'Rosonio so long from your presence: did he surmise the *anxiety* you feel to see him, I have no doubt he would speedily present himself before you."

The sarcastic tone in which these words were uttered, confused Bianca; but she speedily regained her self-command, and her reply was haughty in the extreme.

Montalva left her bursting with rage, which he vainly strove to dissemble, and flew to D'Rosonio.

"Tell me, (cried he) tell me I desire, Fernando, whether Bianca Lupinetti has given you reason to suppose she loves you?"

"My dear Montalva, what a question," said the count.

"By heaven! 'tis one that I will have answered," (exclaimed the signor).

"Montalva, (cried D'Rosonio) is this language to your friend?"

"Forgive me Fernando, (said he), but this woman, curses on the sex! this vain, inconstant woman, treats me with contempt; and from her manner, I have reason to believe you are her present favourite."

"I have no reason to suppose so, (returned the count,) but trust me Stephano, was Bianca to prove herself so unworthy of thy love she would have no charms for me; and surely contempt would overpower affection in the bosom of my friend."

Montalva was silent, but his countenance shewed that his mind was considerably agitated; the person of Bianca had captivated his senses, and her fortune would render him affluent and happy: yet, to marry her: to marry a woman whom he had reason to suppose

inconstant, was a stab to his pride; a
almost resolved to give her up.
t, no, (thought he) such a st
would atify her; and I will not resi
her fortune; it would be madness to l
it."

D'Rosonio watched the changes of
countenance, and rejoiced to see it g
dually assume composure.

"Your suspicions may be wrong, n
friend, (said he); you may have judg
too hastily; or perhaps some womani
pique has made the fair Bianca wish
prove her power over you; and to
cite your jealousy was the readiest m
thod to ascertain her empire."

"Perhaps you are right D'Roson
(cried Montalva); at any rate, I will s
pend my judgment."

But not long could he do so, the
fatuated Bianca, forgetful of the mode
of her sex, wrote to D'Rosonio; and
the most unequivocal terms avowed
partiality, and offered him her hand.

The count rejected her offer with all the contempt which he thought her conduct merited; and maddened by the scorn with which he treated her, she dismissed Montalva; whom she vowed never to see again.

D'Rosonio was with his friend, when he received a letter from Bianca, announcing her determination.

"Vile, perfidious woman! (exclaimed Montalva, as he perused it;) but I will be revenged. I swear by heaven! that thou shalt dearly expiate thy falsehood: read that accursed scroll, Fernando, and tell me what such a wretch deserves."

"Punishment, undoubtedly, (replied the count); but leave her to the vengeance of heaven. How my friend couldst thou punish her? (He paused, but Montalva was silent.) Thou wouldst not now marry her," continued the count.

"Marry her! (repeated Montalva in a tone of scorn,) thou dost not think so

meanly of me; marry, no by heaven! were she a Venus, with the dowry of a princess, I would reject her with scorn and abhorrence; but there are ways to humble her; I will possess myself of her lovely person, I will enjoy the triumph of seeing her kneel at my feet to supplicate for that hand which she now so insolently rejects, and I will spurn her from me."

"Good heaven! Montalva, what dost thou say, (cried the astonished count); surely my friend will not turn ravisher; will not for ever stamp his name with disgrace and infamy. Heaven knows, Stephano, how dear thou art to my heart; but could I for a moment believe thee serious; could I suppose that ought but rage and disappointment urged thee to talk thus, I would instantly renounce thee. Leave this perfidious woman to her own conscience, that will sooner or later avenge thee; and in other pursuits thou wilt soon forget one, who was never worthy of thy love."

Montalva heard the count with stifled rage, but he resolved to dissemble.

"I thank thee my friend, (said he), my cooler judgment would have suggested what thou hast said; but passion mastered reason; we will speak of this no more."

D'Rosonio embraced him. "Now, (cried he,) I recognise my friend; that was spoken like Montalva. Come, will you accompany me to the Palazzo Romaldi? The lovely marquise has to-night a brilliant party, and the gaiety of the scene will amuse you."

Montalva consented, and they went. The marquise's guests, were as usual, the most elegant people in Naples; and Montalva in the midst of a circle of beauties appeared to have forgotten his chagrin: but his gaiety was entirely dissembled, his mind was occupied with schemes of vengeance on Bianca; but as he feared that D'Rosonio might interfere with his project, he resolved to lull the count's suspicions asleep, by affect-

ing a tranquillity that he was far from feeling. The ingenuous D'Rosonio, who had not an idea that Montalva would deceive him, was completely the dupe of his artifice; and rejoiced to see that he had banished the unworthy Bianca from his mind.

While Montalva was arranging a plan for carrying off the Signora Lupinetti, she suddenly left Naples; nor could he discover where she was gone. Montalva's rage at this event knew no bounds he fancied that D'Rosonio suspected his intentions and had given Bianca intimation of them; and this supposition created in his bosom the greatest enmity to the count; nor could the favou which D'Rosonio daily lavished upon him, excite in return a spark of gratitude: on the contrary, when he reflected that Bianca's fortune would have rendered him as affluent as his cousin, he inwardly execrated the count as the cause of his losing it.

Montalva, soon after the affair with

Bianca, entered into the army; and the count's interest and fortune were so greatly serviceable to him, that he obtained rapid promotion; his opinion of the fair sex, never good, had been rendered worse by Bianca's perfidy; and he vowed that riches only should tempt him to marry.

D'Rosonio became enamoured of the beautiful Maria De Velorno. Nature had been lavish of her gifts to Maria; her person was lovely, and her mind was the seat of every virtue; her birth and fortune rendered her a suitable wife for the count, who proposed for her, and was accepted.

The marriage of Fernando and his Maria, was an event far from pleasing to Montalva, who often visited the castle of the count; and bitter were his feelings when he contemplated the happiness which this amiable pair enjoyed. 'Such, (thought he), might have been my lot; had not D'Rosonio stepped between me and happiness."

One day, while he was indulging reflections of this nature, D'Rosonio o served him attentively. "All is n right in the mind of my friend, (cried h tell me Stephano, what disturbs the

Montalva evaded the question, a the count continued, "I have thoug since I have myself known the deligh of domestic happiness, that thou migh est perhaps have sighed for them; fo give me, but the depression which have for some time perceived makes n think that an attachment to some fair on rich only in the gifts of nature, pre upon the spirits of my friend; if th is the case Montalva, thou knowest th my fortune is thine.

"I thank thee from my soul, D'Ro sonio (said Stephano), but thou art mis taken; no my friend, I have done wit love, the perfidy of Bianca has steele my heart against the attractions o beauty; and should I ever marry, i must be to a woman possessed of suffi cient riches to restore the fading honour

of my house. I thank thy generous friendship, already have I been but too much obliged to thee."

Soon after this conversation, a youthful friend of the countess's arrived at the castle; never had Montalva beheld such beauty, but Valeria Di Soranza was poor; to think of her as a wife was impossible; and the friendship with which the countess regarded her, made Montalva fear to endeavour to gain her as a mistress; she was an orphan and of noble birth; young, artless, and formed for love, her heart soon spoke in favour of Montalva; the graces of whose person and manners were indeed most striking. He saw, and ungenerously pursued the advantage he had gained, and the unfortunate Valeria soon became deeply attached to him.

Had Valeria been rich, Montalva would not have hesitated to avow his passion for her, but to give her his hand, and owe to the generosity of D'Rosonio the portion of his bride, was a humilia-

tion which his pride could not submit
yet, every day her beauty and soft
made a deeper impression upon him,
his manner to her became more ten
The count's castle was situate at s
distance from Naples, and Montalva
prolonged his visit much beyond
usual length; he did not love the c
try, and he was incapable of partic
ting in the happiness which the c
and countess enjoyed: he was ther
in general anxious to escape from
society; but now, the presence of V
acted as a spell upon his senses, an
seemed to have no power to fly.

"Confusion! (said he mentally);
am I about? I will return to Naples
in the smiles of venal beauty, los
remembrance of Valeria."

He mentioned his intentions to
count that day; Valeria was pre
and he watched her looks while
spoke of leaving the castle; she av
ed meeting his eye, but the deep su
sion of her cheek, the ashy paleness

almost instantly succeeded it, and the trembling of her whole frame, proved that she did not hear the intelligence with indifference.

"Nay, Montalva, (cried the count), we cannot consent to lose thee: How say you Maria, (turning to the countess, who at that moment entered), will you and Signora Di Soranzo suffer Montalva to depart?"

"No, in truth, (replied she), if our commands to the contrary have power to stay the signor."

"They would be irresistible; (cried Montalva, bowing); but that business of import"——

"Heed him not Maria, 'tis but a mere excuse, (interrupted the count,) he is tired of the peaceful shades of D'Rosonio, and sighs for the dissipation of Naples; is it not so, Stephano?"

"No, on my word you wrong me, count, (said Montalva); it is business, and of consequence, that obliges me to tear myself from this castle."

They did not press him further, a the next day he quitted them; but sought in vain to banish the remembra of Valeria; her lovely image was ev before him, and for the first time, turned with disgust from the blandis ments of the fairest conrtezans in N ples.

The signor Fiorenzo, who was di tantly related to D'Rosonio, became this period an inmate of his castle for short time; the lovely Valeria caug his heart, and he did not hesitate to offe her his hand. The Signor Fioren was of middle age, his person had bee accounted handsome, and might still reckoned fine; his temper was ope cheerful, and benign, and his birth an fortune were far beyond what Valeri could expect. The count and coun tess D'Rosonio rejoiced at a proposal s flattering to the signora, whom they both loved with the tenderest affection; and Maria undertook to acquaint her with it.

"Methinks, (cried the countess to Valeria), we have been more cheerful since the arrival of our new guest, who will I hope remain with us for some time. What does my Valeria think of the Signor Fiorenzo?"

"He appears good and amiable," replied Valeria.

"And his person, (cried the countess); we women generally mention that first, what think you of it?

"Indeed (cried the signora), I hardly know what to say, for the truth is that I never have observed it."

"But the signor has not been so unobservant, (said the countess); he thinks Valeria De Soranza equally lovely and amiable; (she paused, but no expression of pleasure appeared in the intelligent countenance of Valeria, and the countess continued), "the heart of Signor Fiorenzo has hitherto been inaccessible to love, and some of the fairest of our Neapolitan dames, have tried their charms in vain; but he now acknowledges

the force of beauty, and sues for the affections and the hand of my friend."

Valeria turned pale. "I feel grateful for the signor's notice, (cried she), but—"

"Nay, dear Valeria, (interrupted Maria,) think before you positively refuse Fiorenzo is a man so formed to make you happy that ——"

"I own his merit, (cried she), but dearest friend, think me not ungrateful, if on this one point, I must differ with you; indeed, indeed, my heart can never be the signor's; and never will I, friendless as I am, bestow my hand, where I cannot give my heart:" she burst into tears as she spoke.

"No, dear Valeria, (said the countess, embracing her); you are not friendless; never will I again speak to you of Fiorenzo. Are you not the sister of my heart? and does not D'Rosonio, equally with myself, love and regard you? Banish then the unkind idea, that we could wish ought but your happiness."

"Oh! my friend, my dear friend, (cried

Valeria as she returned the countess's embrace,) why cannot I ——" she stopped at that moment, her whole heart was upon her lips, but a natural and ingenuous shame made her hesitate to own her affection for Montalva. Ah! ill-fated Valeria, hadst thou confided thy secret to the bosom of friendship, what misery hadst thou been spared.

The countess mentioned to her lord he manner in which Valeria received he intelligence of Signor Fiorenzo's assion, and D'Rosonio agreed with her hat it would be cruelty to importune he signora further.

"I am more hurt my friend than I ould have supposed possible, (said Fiorenzo when D'Rosonio reluctantly acquainted him with the ill success of his suit); I thought not that my heart was so deeply engaged, but the signora's will shall be my law, and as I cannot remain with safety to myself, I must fly from her presence."

D'Rosonio knew too much
human heart to press the signo
main, and in a few days he quitt
castle D'Rosonio.

CHAP. X.

RESTLESS and unhappy, Montalva persuaded himself that he might without danger return to the mansion of the count.

"I can have nothing to fear from Valeria, (thought he,) and D'Rosonio will think my absence unkind. A letter of the count's containing the warmest invitation to the castle lay before him. "I must accept it," (said he, mentally); and the next day he left Naples for the castle D'Rosonio.

The count and countess welcomed him with all the warmth of friendship,

but in the glow of transport that light up the lovely countenance of Valer Montalva read a welcome the sweet to his heart.

"We will make a prisoner of th now, Montalva, (cried the count), a no business of import shall again rob of thee."

"You will not say so count, (repli Montalva, laughing); by and bye, for have come to tire out the patience a the hospitality of my friend."

"You observe the challenge Valeri (said D'Rosonio), and remember, Mo talva, that now thou art bound to stay.

Every glance which he stole at th varying countenance of the Signora I Soranzo, betrayed to the acute and pen trating Montalva the emotions of h heart.

"She loves me, (said he exultingly t himself); and passion for a momer silenced ambition.

Every day Montalva almost unconsc ously shewed Valeria, by a thousan

minute attentions, the power she possessed over his heart; yet had he art enough to veil from the count and countess his love for the signora, who resigned her whole soul to the influence of a passion which she cherished with delight, unconscious that it was soon to become the torment of her existence.

The day after Montalva's arrival, D'Rosonio told him of the Signor Fiorenzo's proposal for Valeria.

"Had Fiorenzo asked the hand of my sister, and she gave it to him willingly, I should be proud to call him brother; and for Valeria's sake I grieve that she should reject him, but her heart did not speak in his favour, and who shall dictate to the heart?"

"The signora's is probably engaged," said Montalva confusedly.

"The countess thinks not, (replied D'Rosonio); and indeed when we consider that she has been secluded in a monastry from her birth, 'till she accepted the countess's protection, I do not

think that her young heart has yet l
the power of love."

"I have heard you say that she
an orphan, but of her story I kn
nothing;" cried Montalva.

"Her father was the friend of
Maria's, (said the count), and never w
there a braver or a worthier man than
Soranzo. Of noble birth, but scant
gifted with the favours of fortune,
Soranzo sought by his sword to reste
his name to its ancient splendour;
fought and bled for Naples: his soverei
acknowledged his services with thank
but laurels, not preferment, was the r
ward of his bravery; and though a n
tion's idol, he pined in honourable ind
gence. One night, that he had din
with a party of officers, and was retur
ing home at a late hour; he observed
man much muffled up, slowly following
gentleman who was evidently unconsc
ous that he did so; Di Soranzo saw hi
put his hand into his bosom and dra
from it a stiletto, and he instantly co

jectured his purpose; nor was he mistaken; the assassin drew near his destined prey, and at the very moment when his arm was raised to plunge the stiletto into the bosom of the signor, Di Soranzo arrested the blow; the bravo dexterously eluded his grasp, and fled. Di Soranzo would have pursued him but for the stranger, who overwhelmed him with thanks and expressions of gratitude.

"'I guess,(cried he,) from whence this dastardly blow proceeds, and my life would have fallen a sacrifice to the basest treachery, but for the goodness of heaven in sending you to my assistance; and never will I, signor, forget the debt of gratitude I owe you.'

"Di Soranzo interrupted his thanks, by an assurance that they were misplaced, since common humanity only would have impelled him to save the life of a fellow creature, even at some hazard; whereas, in truth, there was none in what he did. He insisted upon walking

home with the stranger, who was, I found, the Signor Lodivico Verezzi. He rejoiced that providence had made him the instrument of saving the life of so good a man; for the worth of Verezzi was well known to him by report. When they reached the house of the signor, Di Soranzo declined his invitation to enter it and promising to see him in the morning, took his leave.

"Early the next day, he paid his promised visit to Verezzi, who received him with the warmest demonstrations of pleasure.

"'You look pale and unrefreshed signor, (said Di Soranzo); I hope that your last night's adventure is not the cause?'

"'It is indeed, (replied Verezzi) this is the third time that my life has been attempted; and I have reason to believe that these attempts proceed from the son of my dearest friend.'

"'But surely, (cried Di Soranzo), re

gard for your own safety, would impel you to punish the assassin, if you know him to be such.'

"'Though my suspicion is strong, and I think well founded, (said Verezzi,) yet, I have no absolute proof; and for his father's sake, I am unwilling to take any step against him; I will tell you signor why I suspect, and you can then judge whether I am right.

"'Heaven has blest my declining age with one daughter, who is my only child. During the pregnancy of my wife, I had a severe fit of illness; and almost despairing of my recovery, she vowed if I was spared, to dedicate her expected infant to the service of heaven; her prayers were heard; I recovered, and my daughter before she saw the light was destined to a life of monastic seclusion. When I recovered, and my wife acquainted me with the vow she had made to the Virgin, I deeply regretted it; but there was now no remedy, and as the infant proved a girl, I consoled

myself with the hope that heaven wo
bless us with a son; these hopes w
however disappointed, we had not a
more children, and I could not help
pining, when I thought that we m
one day lose our Albertina, who was
delight of our lives.

"'When my child was about fifteen,
pleased heaven to deprive me of h
mother; this was the severest blow
had ever met with; and but for Alber
na, I should have sunk under it: s
was indeed an angel of consolation; a
her pious cares at length succeeded
calming my mind, and restoring me
tranquillity, though not to happine
I had taken care to keep my Alberti
as much as possible secluded from so
ety, that she might not have to reg
those pleasures which she was destin
never to enjoy: but chance present
her to the view of the Count D'Avil
he was captivated with my child, a
he thought that his rank and immen
wealth would make her accept his of

ed hand with transport; besides, his father, the Duke De ——— had been my patron, and was still my friend. Had not my wife's vow rendered the marriage of Albertina impossible; yet, never should she have become the wife of D'Avila; whose youthful depravity had tarnished the honour of the illustrious house. The air of proud condescension, with which he made his proposals, roused my indignation; but I suppressed it, and coldly returning him thanks for the honour he intended me, informed him that Albertina was already dedicated to the church.

"'I shall not attempt, my dear signor, to repeat to you the blasphemous things which this young libertine uttered, when he found that I was firm in my purpose. 'Respect for your father, young man, (cried I) prevents me chastising your insolence as it deserves; but I insist upon your instantly quitting my house:' he obeyed, but he vowed revenge, and I have but too much reason

to believe that he strove to keep h
word. This is as I have told you th
third attempt that has been made upo
my life; and while I remain in Naple
I think I shall not be safe from the da
ger of the assassin. It is now time th
my daughter's noviciate should co
mence, but I have hitherto wanted res
lution to part with her; the sacrific
must however be made, and when
have placed her in a convent, I mean t
travel.'

"Di Soranzo approved of the signor'
resolution, and after some time spent i
conversation, he took his leave. Soo
after, Verezzi quitted Naples; and
the time of his departure from that cit
Di Soranzo was absent from it. Soo
after his return, his cousin Martina I
Soranzo, made a temporary retreat fro
the world, in consequence of the loss
her mother; she took up her abode f
some time with the nuns of St. Cath
rine; and Di Soranzo often visited her.

"'We have here, (cried she one da

to him), one of the loveliest girls I ever beheld; she is a novice, but I pity her from my soul; for had she been allowed to chuse, I am well convinced that a convent would not have been her destination; she seems however resigned to her fate, but it is the resignation of despair, or I am much mistaken.'

"Di Soranzo joined with her in pitying the young novice whose name he thought not of inquiring, and when he visited Martina again, he saw a young and lovely female at the grate conversing with a lady advanced in life. When Martina addressed her cousin by his name, the young novice started, and timidly regarding the signor, 'Surely, (cried she), I behold the preserver of my father; is it not to you, signor, that Verezzi owes his life?'

"'The service that I rendered Signior Verezzi was the mere result of accident, (replied Di Soranzo wishing to wave the acknowledgments with which Albertina overwhelmed him). Never had he

beheld such beauty, and he sighed
he reflected that she must for eve
nounce that world, which she se
born to ornament.

"I will not tire your patience, M
ya, with an account of the progres
passion, which Di Soranzo and All
na disguised under the name of fr
ship; the innocent girl thought it
impossible for her to be too grate
the preserver of her father; and D
ranzo imagined that, knowing as h
that their union was impossible, he
regulate his desires, and love her
sister: How many shapes does this
duous passion put on, to deceive it
taries? and what caution, what prud
can ward off its attacks? The first
that opened Di Soranzo's eyes to th
ture of his sentiments for Albertina
the death of her father; Verezzi l
the convent the whole of his prop
with a proviso that his daughter took
veil there; but if she proferred any
religious house, she possessed the p
of chusing any convent in Na

The time of her novitiate was nearly expired, and the abbess thought that this melancholy event should rather hasten than retard her taking the veil.

"When Albertina contemplated her lot, her spirits sunk in absolute despair; she was persuaded that the tears which she incessantly shed, flowed only for the loss of her father; but she deceived herself, the idea of renouncing every social tye, and burying her youth and hopes in the gloom of a cloister, cost her many pangs; of Di Soranzo she did not suffer herself to think; yet, his idea would intrude, and vainly did she strive to vanish it from her mind: her perpetual struggles impaired her health, her soft cheek lost its bloom, and her eye its lustre, and it became a doubt whether she would live to take the vows.

"Father Velasquez, the confessor of the convent, saw and compassionated the struggles in the soul of the young novice; he communicated to the lady

abbess his fears, that obedience to the will of her deceased father alone influenced her to take the veil.

"'But surely, father (cried the abbess), her repugnance to a monastic life will in time subside; she was destined to it even before her birth, and it is impossible for her to regret a world to which she is a total stranger.'

"'I cannot think (said the father), that she is obliged to fulfil the vow made by her mother; nay, I do not think her mother justifiable in making such a vow.'

"'Father,' cried the abbess in a tone of astonishment—

"'No one (returned Velasquez), can I trust, entertain a greater veneration for religion than myself; but no rational being can suppose that a parent's rights extend to such a length; and if this young creature is decidedly averse to a monastic life, I should advise her to get the church's permission to return to the world.'

"'I am sorry, father (said the abbess), that these are your sentiments, for they are not mine; but if Albertina prefers turning a beggar to'—

'A beggar!' repeated the father.

'Yes (said the abbess, firmly), a beggar; for by the will of her father, the convent where she takes her vows is to possess her fortune; and as she well knows that he never would have sanctioned her returning to the world, she surely cannot think of claiming the deceased signor's property, which it is evident he meant to employ in the service of the church.'

"'And can you then (cried the father in a tone of indignation), think of appropriating the possessions of this orphan?'

"'No, Father Velasquez (replied the abbess), I call Heaven to witness that, could she prefer any other convent to ours, I would with pleasure resign the hope of enriching ourselves; but the

Virgin forbid, that when I have th power to punish, I should reward sacri lege; were I to do so, I should conside myself as an abettor in the crime.'

"The benevolent father saw that would be vain to argue with the abbes he knew the disposition of the holy m ther of St. Catherine's; but that sh should think of enriching the convent by appropriating to it the whole posses sions of the hapless Albertina, was s glaring an act of injustice, that he won dered at her open avowal of it.

"'Poor Albertina! (said he, mental ly); in a convent thou wilt be miserable yet what other asylum hast thou? thy youth and loveliness would be but snares to thee in a world, where without friend or fortune, thou must be wretched.'

"But when Albertina again knelt a the confessional; when the father saw her lovely form withered by secret sor row; the resolution he had made to b silent gave way to the emotions of pit

with which his heart was filled; and he kindly asked her the cause of her dejection.

"A burning blush suffused her cheek, but it almost instantly gave place to an ashy paleness, and she hesitated how to reply.

"'I fear, my child, that you are not happy in your mind (said Velasquez); the death of your father was I know a severe stab to your tranquillity, but there is something more, I am convinced, that presses upon your spirits.'

"Albertina burst into tears: 'Oh! holy father (cried she), I scarcely dare own it even to myself, but though I have from my infancy known that I was destined to a monastic life, yet I feel an unaccountable repugnance to it; yet, what can I do? Alas! I was even before my birth a destined victim!'—

"She stopped, frightened at what had escaped her.

"'I know not what to say to you, my child, (cried Velasquez); I think it

might be possible to obtain from the church a dispensation for your mother's vow; which, in strict justice, I know no that you are obliged to fulfil; but what, my poor child, could you do in the world? The abbess, I fear, possesses a power which she is determined to exercise, of appropriating the fortune of your late father to the use of her convent; you have no relations on whose bounty you might rely for protection and support; what, therefore, I must repeat, would become of you?'

"At the mention that it was possible for her to avoid a monastic life, the eyes of Albertina sparkled with joy; but when the father painted what her situation must be in the world, their lustre was again dimmed by tears.

"'Try, Albertina (said the friar), to reconcile your mind, if possible, to the destiny your parents intended you for; but if you cannot, yet let your spirits not sink in despair; remember, my child, that you are not obliged to take

[illegible] immediately: you may take [illegible] time to decide, and Heaven [illegible], and I hope will, restore your mind [illegible].'

The father now bestowed upon her [illegible] benediction, and she departed. Velasquez was the confessor of the Marquise Tivoli, one of the richest and most benevolent women in Naples: though pious, the marquise is no bigot, she has no children, (thought Velasquez), and her near relations are not people who would be envious of her bounty to an orphan; if she did but interest herself for Albertina, the poor child would be saved from the gloomy fate that otherwise awaits her.'

"Father Velasquez was a true disciple of that meek Saviour, who "went about doing good:" he lost no time in speaking of Albertina to the marquise, and he pleaded her cause so powerfully, that the benevolent marquise resolved to afford the young orphan her protection; provided that Albertina gained permis-

sion of the church to leave her convent and that Father Velasquez undertook to procure.

"The joy of the young orphan when the friar communicated this intelligence to her, may easily be imagined; but her transports were checked by the fear that the father would be unsuccessful in procuring her release from the convent. The friar's interest was however greater than she had supposed; and he represented her case in such a manner to his eminence the Cardinal ———, that she had permission to return to the world. The lady abbess's rage knew no bounds; she affected to be shocked at the impiety of Father Velasquez, in obtaining Albertina's liberty; and she declared that she could not, consistently with her notions of religion, consent to suffer the convent to lose any part of the Signor Verezzi's fortune. Velasquez knew that it would be in vain to try to wrest from the iron gripe of the church the patrimony of Albertina; and she was

too happy in regaining her liberty, to waste a thought upon her fortune.

"The marquise received the signora in the kindest manner; and the gratitude of Albertina, her amiable temper, and gentle manners, soon converted pity into a sentiment almost maternal. The death of a near relation had obliged Di Soranzo to leave Naples for a short time; when he returned, Albertina was under the protection of the marquise.—Those only who have loved, and endured the torment of supposing that it was criminal to indulge a passion which it was impossible to subdue, can conceive the delight which Di Soranzo felt, when he found his Albertina at liberty. 'She may yet be mine,' cried he, in a tone of transport. His poverty was forgotten, and every suggestion of reason and prudence vanished before the magic power of love.

"Di Soranzo was not personally known to the marquise, but he found it an easy matter to procure an introduction to

her; and Albertina's account of hi was sufficient to make him a favouri with her patroness, who soon perceive that the young people regarded ea other with affection. She commun cated her discovery to Father Vela quez: 'I will own to you, father, (cri she), that I could have wished it othe wise; Albertina's beauty and birth migh have procured her a husband among the noblest youths of Naples: than Di Soranzo none can be worthier, but he is poor.'—She paused—'What I can do shall not be withheld, but that will be little. I solemnly promised my late lord that, at my decease, I would leave the property which I enjoy from his bounty to the children of his nephew, now in Spain; my power to serve the lovers therefore, you see is limited.'

"In a short time, the marquise spoke to Di Soranzo, who acknowledged his passion for Albertina, and with all the sophistry of a lover, endeavoured to persuade the marquise that, limited as his

fortune was, it would be sufficient for his happiness, if Albertina deigned to share it. 'This (said the marquise with a smile), is the usual reasoning of lovers; but believe me, Di Soranzo, I will not be your enemy.'

"She communicated to Albertina, his wishes and his hopes; and her blushes, her confusion, convinced her patroness that her heart was Di Soranzo's. To be brief, the lovers were united in a short time, and never was felicity purer, or more likely to be permanent, than that of Di Soranzo and his Albertina.

"The death of the amiable marquise, was the first interruption to their happiness; and it was indeed severely felt by both: it was also in a pecuniary way, a loss, as the marquise had little to bequeath, and during her life time her adopted daughter had shared her fortune; but in justice to Di Soranzo and his lovely wife it must be owned, that their tears flowed solely for the death of their benefactress; and self was

forgotten in their sorrow for her. Time restored them to tranquillity, and the birth of a girl made them once more happy.

"Though of a contented and humble spirit, Signora Di Soranzo had been accustomed to all the elegancies of life, and as she was not aware how limited her husband's means were, and how insufficient to support that stile of life to which she had been accustomed; and Di Soranzo loved her too tenderly to be as prudent as he ought to have been. In a short time after the death of the marquise he found himself involved: Albertina was shocked at what she termed her own imprudence, and most sedulously set about a reform in their expences; love divested poverty of its horrors, and all might have been well but for the death of their infant. Di Soranzo felt this blow severely, but to the heart of Albertina it was a mortal stab. Her mother, (after whom she was named), was by birth a German, and in

her early years had professed the reformed religion, which she had renounced upon her marriage with Verezzi; she had been, though a good, yet a bigotted woman; and the mind of Albertina was tinctured with superstition; she imbibed an idea that the death of her child was a punishment for her rejection of a monastic life; and from the moment that she entertained this thought she was miserable: a second pregnancy Di Soranzo hoped would relieve her mind, but he was mistaken; gloom and despondency, had taken hold of her spirits, and in a short time her health declined; the birth of Valeria gave a temporary check to her mother's malady, but it soon returned, and before her daughter was a year old Signora Di Soranzo sunk into the grave.

"The loss of his wife had nearly cost Di Soranzo his reason, and it was indeed a blow which he never recovered; he placed Valeria in proper hands, and resolved to travel. When his daughter

had attained the age of seven years, returned to Naples; but the pleasu which the sight of Valeria would ha given him, was poisoned by her resem blance to her mother, whose image sh was. Time had not healed the wound ed spirit of Di Soranzo, and the sigh of his daughter, instead of a consolation was a torment to him. He placed he in a convent, and again quitted Naples Death soon after put a period to his suf ferings, and the little Valeria became a orphan, with but a slender portion.

"My Maria was educated in the sam convent, and from their earliest days they were friends; Maria was four year older than Valeria, and the sweet gir looked on her as an elder sister. Sinc the countess's marriage they have con stantly corresponded, and I was happy in an opportunity of obliging my Maria, when she expressed a wish for the soci ety of Signora Di Soranzo: but I soon loved the dear girl with a brother's af- fection; her disposition is indeed so

and amiable, that it is impossible
w without loving her."
osonio ceased, and Montalva, who
tened to him with interest, thank-
for his narrative; and as he soon
nk into a reverie, the count left

must think no more of Valeria,
Iontalva, mentally): true, D'Roso-
lares that he considers her as a sis-
t could I bear to marry her and
er portion to his bounty? No,
shall Montalva be so degraded."
thoughts now reverted to Bianca,
th bitterness did he execrate the
in which he had introduced the
to her.
ut for him, (thought he), I would
ave been rich and happy; the
felicity was at my lips, and his
lashed it aside: true, he did it not
onally, but what matters that to

ections like these rendered Mon-
loomy and absent; but he strove

to disperse them, and to deck his fe
tures in smiles. Near the castle Di Ro
nio was a wood, and passing one d
through it Montalva heard the sound
music; he listened attentively, a
found that the sound proceeded from
grotto at a little distance. Montal
was passionately fond of music, and l
stopped to hear the air; it was simpl
but sweet; and most tastefully playe
When it was concluded Montalva ente
ed the grotto; a female, who was seat
with her back towards him, started a
turned round at his approach; he w
surprised to perceive it was Valeria.

"This is an unexpected pleasu
signora, (cried he); but how is it that y
have concealed from us this charmi
talent."

"I am but a learner, (replied sh
blushing); and I must make some pr
ficiency before I own that I can play."

"You are a learner, signora, (cri
he, taking up her lute), who surpass
taste and skill many ladies who thi

themselves mistresses of this charming science."

"I am fond of music, signor, (said Valeria), and I have pleased myself with the thought of surprising the countess by my knowledge of it, when I have made some proficiency, and as this is a retired spot I often practice here."

The innocent Valeria thought not of what she said, but Montalva treasured up her words, and from that hour he found whenever he walked, that some spell drew him to the grotto; the delight which he expressed at hearing Valeria play, was to her a strong stimulus to excel, and often did she innocently say, "that she thought she might soon let the countess into her secret." Montalva had no settled purpose of seduction, but unused to curb his passions, he yielded to their influence; and in one fatal moment, the peace and honour of the unhappy Valeria were lost for ever.

"No sooner was the guilty transport

over, than the bitterest reflections fill
the mind of the signora; she wept
agony, and for some time her seduc
strove in vain to calm the violence
her sorrow; he vowed to make her a
the reparation in his power, and be
sought her to check emotions, whic
might tend to betray that secret the
most wished to hide. Valeria listene
to him in silence, and she strove to b
calm; but though her tears ceased t
flow, her convulsive sighs, and the des
pair painted in her countenance, spok
what passed within.

"For heaven's sake, my Valeri
(cried Montalva), break this silence; th
bitterest reproaches will be more wel
come to me than to see you thus."

"I have no right to reproach yo
signor, (cried Valeria); I must indee
eternally reproach myself. Oh! goo
heaven, (exclaimed she, relapsing int
an agony of grief), what, what have
done?"

Again did Montalva renew his prote

testations: on his knees he vowed to make her his wife; he conjured her to banish from her mind all regret for the past, since the proof she had given him of her love, had only made her dearer to him; and solemnly did he call upon heaven to renounce him when he abandoned her. By these protestations he succeeded at last in restoring some degree of calmness to the mind of Valeria, but when she returned to the castle she felt for the first time afraid to meet the eye of the countess; and pleading indisposition, she retired to her chamber.

When the chaos in the breast of Montalva had a little subbsided, he execrated himself for what had passed. A marriage with Valeria, solemnly as he had sworn to make her his by every sacred tie, was yet a step that he could not resolve to take. "What surety can I have of the faith and honour of a wanton, (said he, mentally); she will not for her own sake betray the past, and I must find some excuse for speedily

leaving the castle." For a moment l heart smote him as he recollected t agonies of Valeria's mind, but he hi tened to banish the impression, a smoothing his brow, joined the co and countess.

Maria was lamenting the illness Valeria as he entered, and the crims of conscious guilt suffused his coun nance as he forced himself to enqu the cause of the signora's indisposition

"It is sudden, (replied the countes nor can she assign a cause for it; I hc that my fears are without foundati but the change in her looks, and t quickness of her pulse alarms me."

Montalva did not attempt a rep "Do not frighten yourself my love, (s the count) Valeria's illness is not hope dangerous, and we will have best advice."

The following day Valeria appea at dinner, to Montalva's great joy; tenderly enquired after her health, a the glance that accompanied his wo

spoke the concern which her illness had occasioned him; the presence of the count and countess rendered him guarded, but the signora hoped every thing from his honour and his love. Minds of a delicate and susceptible nature, (and such was Valeria's), while under the influence of passion, deck the object of their love with every virtue; and it is only the bitterest experience that can dispel an illusion, of all others the most delightful.

"The signor is the friend of the count, (thought she); Maria too, speaks highly of him; he loves me, and he would not, he could not, be so cruel as to abandon me to misery and disgrace." She ventured to meet the eyes of Montalva; they spoke the tenderest affection, and Valeria endeavoured to calm her spirits, and appear cheerful.

Three days passed, and Montalva did not seek to speak to the signora in private; though Valeria would have given

the universe to know when he meant
perform his promise, yet she was too
mid to throw herself in his way. On t
morning of the fourth he had lett
from Naples, and he directly announc
his departure must be immediate. Tl
news was like the sentence of death
Valeria; he took an opportunity to
sure her, "that she might depend
his return the moment that he co
escape from business of the most u
pleasant nature; he besought her
make her mind easy, and to rely up
his honour."

"I do, signor (cried she); Oh, h
miserable should I be if I doubted it
She wept as she spoke; yet the perf
confidence which her look and mant
expressed, gave a momentary pang
the heart of Montalva.

"'Tis barbarous to deceive h
(thought he), and he renewed his p
testations; but when he quitted
castle, his dislike to the idea of mar

ing her, returned; ambition and insensibility resumed their influence over his mind, and the wrongs and sufferings of Valeria were forgotten.

CHAP. XI.

WEEKS passed away, and though
Signor Montalva corresponded regula
with the count, yet there was not a h
given by him of an intention to ret
to the castle D'Rosonio.

"Stephano's absence is unusua
long, Maria (said the count to his w
one day, in the presence of the Sign
Di Soranzo): he has boasted so long
escaping the power of Cupid, that
should not wonder if he was caught
last, and a reluctance to leave the obj
of his passion prevented him from seei
us." The heart of Valeria beat at th

words, and fearing that her emotion would be visible to her friends, she left the room.

"I fear, my dear lord (cried the countess), that your friend has unconsciously robbed my poor Valeria of her heart; I have observed that since he left us she has appeared melancholy and dejected.

"I hope you are mistaken (replied the count), for I much fear that Montalva is not likely to return her affection; and to a heart like her's, no torment could be equal to a hopeless passion.

"I have thought (replied the countess), that he regarded her with tenderness; but his long absence, for which he does not assign any sufficient reason, makes me fear I was mistaken."

Every day increased the dejection of Valeria; but what words can paint the distraction of her mind, when in a short time she had reason to believe herself pregnant? Despair and horror took pos-

session of her soul, and for a moment she entertained the thought of putting an end at once to her miseries and her life; but this idea was momentary; and, falling on her knees, she implored the pardon of the Almighty for so impious a thought.

To let the Signor Montalva know her situation was now her first wish, but from the idea of addressing him by letter she shrunk involuntarily; yet there was no other way that she could take to communicate it to him: a latent hope yet remained that this circumstance might induce him to perform his promise, and in a few incoherent lines she acquainted him with the consequence of their indiscretion.

Montalva was dressing for a gay party when the letter of Valeria was delivered to him; and he could not help muttering execrations on his own folly, as he perused it. What was to be done, to prevent D'Rosonio knowing the circumstance? "I must remove her privately

from the castle (thought he), and when all is over, immure her for life in a convent: but will she consent to this? She must, if once I have her in my power."

Too politic to answer her letter otherwise than in person, he hastened to the castle of D'Rosonio; he was received by the count and countess with pleasure, and Valeria presaged every thing that she could wish from the promptitude with which he had hastened to her.

The moment he had an opportunity of speaking to her in private, he tenderly lamented his absence, which business of the most vexatious nature, he assured her, only could have occasioned; his affairs, he grieved to say, were much deranged, and at present it was absolutely impossible for him to offer her his hand; a short time he hoped would put it in his power to perform his promise; but 'till he did, there was but one way for her to avoid discovery; he would provide an asylum, where she could remain 'till he, in the face of the world, owned

her as his wife. The heart of Valer sunk at a proposal so different to wh she had expected; but she dared n refuse compliance.

"Tell me, my Valeria (said Mon talva); do you agree to my wishes?"

"Alas! you know I have no choice (replied she); I must do as you please signor; my fate is in your hands."

"My future life (cried he, eagerly shall prove that I deserve the confidenc you place in me." The eye of Valeri met his, and for a moment he shrun abashed from her mild but penetratin glance.

D'Rosonio and his Maria had bee now nearly two years married, and the were both desirous of children; th countess had been lavish of her gifts t the convent of her namesake, the Vir gin, and daily did the amiable enthusias beseech the Holy Mary for an heir t the estate and title of her beloved lord For some time past she had had reaso to think that her prayers were heard, bu

she carefully kept to herself expectations that might be disappointed; and it was not 'till hope became certainty, that she communicated her situation to the enraptured count.

Perhaps nothing could have aggravated the misery of the unfortunate Signora di Soranzo more than this circumstance; her nature was too noble and too pure for her to envy the happiness of her friend, but when she contrasted the countess's situation with her own, her heart was rent with the severest pangs. Tenderly solicitous for the health of his wife, the count's eye followed her steps with an expression of mingled pleasure and anxiety. Did she express the slightest wish for any thing, he was miserable until it was procured for her; tenderly attentive as he had always been to her, he was now if possible more so than ever, and her health and amusement seemed to be his sole care.

How different was the fate of Valeria!

Though her pregnancy was not yet v
sible, she shrunk with terror from eve
glance, fearful that it should be su
pected; and often, when sinking und
the severest sufferings both of mind a
body, she strove to appear as usual, l
the countess should insist upon her ha
ing advice, which she knew must disc
ver her situation. Montalva had aga
left the castle, after promising to retu
before it would be necessary for her
quit it; the dread of discovery made h
most anxious to be gone; yet, wh
she thought of leaving, perhaps for eve
the only friends she had on earth, h
very soul recoiled, and there were m
ments when she thought of ackno
ledging to the countess what had passe
but her native modesty prevented h
taking this step, and she awaited the r
turn of Montalva in a state of mi
that might excite pity even in the b
som of a savage.

For his own sake Montalva kept h
promise; he had arranged every thi

for Valeria's flight, but fear of being suspected as the cause of it forbade his accompanying her. Nothing could exceed the consternation of the count and countess when she was missed; the most diligent search was made for her, but in vain; and grieved as D'Rosonio was at her loss, he was doubly so from the fear that her flight would injure the countess's health. Neither D'Rosonio nor his Maria had the slightest suspicion of Montalva, who remained at the castle for some days after Valeria left it.

From the castle, he returned to Naples; and stopped there for some time before he ventured to join Valeria, whom he had placed in a retired situation some miles distant from thence; callous as his heart was, he felt shocked and surprised at the alteration which so short a time had made in the victim of his arts; her hollow eye, for ever dimmed by tears; her pallid cheek, from whence the rose of youth and health had vanished; spoke volumes of reproaches,

though her tongue uttered none. wanted yet some months to that tim which Valeria so much dreaded; b though Montalva saw her frequently, h did not again mention the performanc of his promise, and every day diminish ed her faith in his word; slowly, an reluctantly, did she acknowledge to he own heart, the unworthiness of a man who spite of reason, she still loved; an as the time of her becoming a mothe approached, the idea of what would be the future destiny of herself and her in fant, almost distracted her.

At last the moment to which she looked forward with so much terror arrived; and she gave birth to a lovely girl. Oh, nature, how sweet is thy power over the heart of a mother! all that the unfortunate Valeria had suffered, al that she might suffer, was forgotten when she pressed her babe to her bosom and wetted its little face with tears o delight.

Montalva was at Naples, when the *ac-*

[illegible]ement of Valeria took place, and [illegible]rly a month elapsed before he saw [illegible]; but what a revolution had that time [illegible]ated in the mind of Valeria; the birth [illegible] her child had opened to her a source [illegible] happiness, the most unhoped for; [illegible] was never tired of caressing it, of gazing on its little features, and tracing in them her own likeness, and that of Montalva. Of his making her his wife, she did not now retain a hope, but she had determined on a plan that would, she thought, meet with his approbation; and she longed impatiently for his return that she might communicate it to him.

Montalva's resolution in respect to the future destination of Valeria, had long been fixed; and he purposely refrained from seeing her 'till he thought she had regained sufficient strength to hear her fate without danger to her life; as soon as he thought that was the case, he resolved to lose no time in announcing to her his determination.

He found her, with her infant in her arms; she presented it to him, and he coldly kissed its cheek. "I have much to say to you Valeria, (cried he); will you dismiss your child, and hear me?" His words and still more the manner in which they were uttered fell like a bolt of ice upon the heart of Valeria; she gave the infant to her attendant, who left the room, and Montalva proceeded.

"I have unfortunately, Valeria, injured my estate, which was never large, by some youthful errors, and I have not at this time the means to support a wife in the manner which my rank demands; this is the only excuse I have to offer, for the non-performance of my promise to you; but it is an excuse which when you reflect upon the miseries that attend a union where prudence is not consulted, you will, I think admit the justice of." He paused, but Valeria replied not, and he continued. "After what has passed, there is but one step which you can take with propriety; but one safe and

nourable asylum, to which you can
ort;——a convent."

"A convent! exclaimed Valeria;
hat then becomes of my child?"

"I will see that it is properly taken
re of," cried Montalva.

"Oh! no, no, (said Valeria), never
ill I consent to part with my babe; I
n remain in obscurity; I had determin-
to do so; you have nothing, indeed
u have not, to apprehend from me;
t I will lose my life sooner than my
ild."

The emotion of Valeria, for a mo-
ent staggered the cruel resolution
ich Montalva had formed; but it
s only for a moment.

"Check these wild emotions Valeria,
id he sternly); every consideration
reason and prudence, calls imperiously
on you to part with the infant, whom
would be madness to keep."

The tears, the distraction of the un-
tunate Valeria, could not prevent her
ld being torn from her arms, and for

some days afterwards she was so ill, tha Montalva dared not remove her to th convent where he intended to place her her illness indeed appeared so dangerous that he begun to fear for her life, an hardened as he was, he started at th thought of being her murderer: he sent her a message by her attendant that he had something to propose which would alleviate her grief, and Valeria, who hoped that he meant to restore her child, instantly admitted him.

After endeavouring to palliate the step he had taken, he informed her that though for the present, he was compelled to separate her from her infant, it was not his intention to do so for ever; since in a very few years, he would place the child in the convent where he meant she should reide. He thought that if she knew he was positively determined, that she should take the veil, it would be a blow that she could not support; this part of his resolution therefore, he concealed from her.

The hope of again seeing her child, had an almost magical effect upon Valeria, and in a short time, she was so far recovered, as to be removed to the convent where her seducer meant that she should end her days.

Montalva had told the lady abbess, that she was an orphan, and his near relation; and that a wish to preserve her from the snares to which youth and loveliness is liable, was the reason he placed her in the convent of St. Sebastian. As he was well aware that the nuns would be anxious to dive into the cause of her melancholy, he added that she had recently lost an aunt with whom she had resided the greatest part of her life. He told Valeria the tale he had fabricated, which he advised her for her own sake not to contradict, and he assured her, that on her acquiescence with his will in this, and every other respect, depended her hope of seeing her child.

His victim heard him in silence, her meek spirit was indeed bowed to

the earth by affliction, and Montalv
exulted in the hope that his baseness t
her would for ever remain concealed
The nuns of St. Sebastian welcome
her with kindness, and as soon as h
had placed her there, Montalva returne
to Naples.

CHAPTER XII.

During Montalva's short absence from Naples, a change the most melancholy had taken place at the castle of D'Rosonio. The count had looked forward with delight to the moment that was to make him a father; little did he think the price which he was to pay for that endearing name; his adored wife lived to give birth to a daughter, but her angelic spirit fled in a few hours after. This blow overwhelmed the unhappy D'Rosonio; he shut himself in his chamber and refused all consolation.

No sooner did Montalva learn this

melancholy news, than he hastened t
his friend, not with the hope of admi
nistering comfort, but with the desire c
gratifying the long cherished hatred h
bore to the count. Never had he for
given the preference which Bianca shew
ed to D'Rosonio; and innocent as the
count was of her perfidy, Montalva
from that hour, regarded him with ab
horrence; self-interest, indeed, made
him carefully conceal his sentiments,
and he was a master of dissimulation;
with the joy of a demon, did he witness
the agonies to which the unhappy count
abandoned himself; while with the
most hypocritical affectation of pity, he
joined him in deploring the loss of his
Maria. The infant who was named
Isabel, had been given to the care of a
nun in the neighbourhood of the castle,
as the sight of her aggravated her father's
grief.

For some months, Montalva remain
ed at the castle of D'Rosonio; and such
was his dissimulation, that the coun

believed Montalva's grief for the countess was inferior only to his own. A summons, as the signor pretended, from Naples, compelled him to quit the castle, and he bade the count adieu, with a promise speedily to return. The letter was from the abbess of St. Sabastian's; she informed him that Valeria's death was every day expected, and begged him if he wished to see her alive, to lose no time in hastening to the convent.

He travelled with the utmost expedition, but he came too late, for when he arrived, he learned that Valeria had just breathed her last. Conscience for a moment blanched the cheek of Montalva, at this intelligence; he could not conceal from himself that his hand had conducted the poor lost one to the tomb; her lovely form drooping in silent and uncomplaining anguish was before him, and he vainly strove to stifle the anguish which the fate of his victim had occasioned him. A few days before her death Valeria had written to him: no

reproach for lost fame or happiness ‹
caped her; she merely conjured him
be a father to his child. "I do n
know what request that letter contai
signor, (said the abbess, as she deliver
it to him); but I think if you had se
the writer when she had delivered it
me, you would not hesitate to grant i

"I will grant it, (replied Montal
earnestly), I swear by heaven! that h
request shall be complied with. Y
Valeria, (added he mentally), I will i
deed be a father to thy infant." H
hastened to the cottage where he h
placed the babe, and his mind was
little soothed, by the thought of atoni
to her, for the wrongs he had do
her unfortunate mother; but his pu
pose was vain, the child had died
convulsions a week before his arrival. H
returned to Naples and strove to bani
reflection by plunging into dissipatio
but the image of Valeria was before hi
and bitter remembrance mingled t
cup of pleasure with gall. A lett

Twenty

from D'Rosonio recalled him to the castle, and his soul sickened at finding the count more tranquil; the loss of his Maria still sat heavy upon his spirits, but he sought for and found consolation in the caresses of his child: the little Isabel and her nurse had during Montalva's absence, become inmates at the castle. She was now nearly a year old, and when one day D'Rosonio thanked that almighty power, which in depriving him of his wife, had spared to him his child, the bitterest reflections swelled the heart of Montalva almost to bursting.

"Yes, (thought he), thou art indeed the favourite of fortune, but no happiness is reserved for me; I have caused the death of an innocent girl, and the only means of atonement I had in my power is wrested from me, and thou D'Rosonio art the cause of all; hadst thou not gained the affections of the weak and wavering Bianca, I had now been affluent and happy; no curses

would have corroded my bosom, no remorse poisoned my enjoyments."

Thoughts like these cast an unusual gloom over the countenance of Montalva; he shortened his visit and returned to Naples; restless and unhappy, he sought in vain to drown reflection in wine. The Neapolitans are strongly addicted to gaming, but though dissipated, this was a vice from which Montalva had hitherto refrained; he now, fatally for himself, sought to find in a refuge from thought; this destructive habit soon grew into a passion; his success was various, but for some time his losses and his gains were nearly equal; this however was not long the case, fortune seemed to have set her face against him, and he lost continually; he applied under different pretexts to D'Ronio, 'till he had drawn from him a very large sum, and he feared that generas he knew the count to be, prudewould at length stop his hand. W he was in this embarrassed and u

py state, D'Rosonio was taken suddenly ill, and a messenger from him summoned Montalva to the castle. The countenances of the domestics on his arrival sufficiently informed him of their master's danger.

"How is the count?" said Montalva to the old steward, who came to receive him.

"Alas! signor, (replied Pietro) we fear he cannot recover. The loss of our dear lady was a heavy blow, but should heaven take his excellenza, what will become of those who owe their subsistence to his bounty, he is perfectly sensible, and I know that he will rejoice to see you, signor; for he has mentioned you several times."

"Will you then, my good Pietro, enquire whether I can be immediately admitted to his chamber?" said Montalva.

Pietro obeyed, but returned to say that the count had fallen into a dose.

"It is the first sleep, signor, (cried

the old man with joy in his countenance, that my lord has had for some days, an please the virgin, it will do him good. The count's repose continued for som hours, and he awoke much refreshed he was rejoiced to find that Montalv was arrived, and desired to see him im mediately. Short as the count's illnes had been, Montalva fancied that Pietr was right in saying that scarcely a hop of his recovery remained. In a lanqui tone, he expressed his pleasure at th sight of the signor, whom he said h scarcely hoped to have seen in this wor again."

"Banish these fears, dear Fernand (cried Montalva), you have still I hop many happy days to see."

"I think not, my friend, (replied th count), but I am in the hands of a all-merciful judge, and to his decree I bow with submissive reverence: In th event of my death I have appointed you guardian to my child; and should hea ven be pleased to take my Isabel, be thou

my heir, I have no relation nearer than yourself, and not one half so dear."

Montalva knelt by the side of the bed, and he hid his face on it at this moment, to conceal the joy which in spite of himself sparkled in his eyes. "I know that to thee, (continued the deceived count), wealth will be a poor compensation for the loss of the companion of thy youth; but heaven may yet restore me." An impious wish to the contrary, though it reached not the lips, burst from the heart of Montalva. From this hour D'Rosonio appeared to gather strength, and the physicians gave the most flattering hopes of his recovery; but this circumstance which filled every other bosom with joy, was a dagger to that of Montalva. From the moment that the count had told him that in the event of his own and Isabel's death, the rich domains of D'Rosonio would be his, imagination had converted his chance of inheritance into a certainty. His present difficulties were such as no

trifling sum would remove, and were he but possessed of riches, he thought he should be secure of happiness.

"Thank heaven, signor, (cried Pietro about a week after Montalva's arrival), the physician has just told me, that if the favourable symptoms continue, his excellenza will in a few days be out of danger; how many hearts will his recovery cheer, but I must hasten with the good news to the convent of St. Francis, the fathers have offered up masses for his health every day since his illness first took place."

It was well that Pietro was neither penetrating nor suspicious, or else the alteration in Montalva's countenance must have struck him. "Confusion (said he mentally, as he paced the room when Pietro quitted him), he will recover; and what then becomes of me? But why must he recover, is there no way to ——? he paused — Dark and malignant as his soul was, *murder* had not yet occurred to him; and slowly did

mind receive the horrid idea, that D'Estonio must die, if he would exist in peace: mistaken Montalva! when did peace dwell with the assassin? For some days his mind was a perfect chaos; unsteady in his dreadful purpose, he saw with terror that every hour the count gathered strength. Fool, madman that I am, (thought he), shall I wait his perfect recovery, and so run the hazard of detection? or shall I give up my purpose, own my distress, and meanly cringe to him for the means of removing it? No, I will perish first! Why should I hesitate to destroy him, has he not blighted all my hopes of happiness? stepped between me and a noble fortune, and rendered me miserable for years past? and have I now a chance of peace but from his death? away then with this childish weakness, he *shall* die!"

When Montalva had formed this dreadful resolution, he sought for means to accomplish his purpose without suspicion; he was skilled in chemistry, and

he procured a poison of the subtlest nature; he always administered the count's medicines, and with a trembling hand did he present to the unhappy D'Rosonio the last draught he ever swallowed; the operation of the poison, though certain, would not he well knew be attended by any of those signs that usually accompany it; and the cause of the count's death, he flattered himself, would for ever remain a secret; with well dissembled grief, Montalva gave orders for a most magnificent funeral, and the remains of the murdered count, were consigned to the grave with a splendour befitting his illustrious rank. Many were the hearts that mourned for D'Rosonio, and the tears that flowed in abundance from his dependants, as they knelt to beseech the mercy of heaven for the soul of their departed lord, was a more certain testimony of his virtues, than the pompous inscription, which his assassin caused to be engraved on his monument.

When the funeral obsequies were performed, Montalva took upon himself, as the late count had willed, the guardianship of the little Isabel; but the sight of the child was hateful to him. Too young to be sensible of her irreparable loss, she lavished, unconsciously, on the destroyer of her father all the fond caresses of infancy. To remove her from the possession of her inheritance, without taking her life, occupied all his thoughts. When once that was done, he flattered himself he should be happy; he affected an uncommon attachment to the child, and pretending business at Naples, took her with him to a magnificent palazzo which he purchased there.

To the murder of the count no one was privy, but to remove Isabel without a confidant would be impossible; but in whom could he confide? No servant of the late count would, he was conscious, assist in wronging his orphan, and there was no domestic about his

own person whom he thought it wou
be prudent to trust. While he was
this perplexed and anxious state, as
was one day rambling in a wood at so
distance from his palazzo, a strang
meanly habited, approached him, a
solicited his charity: Montalva, wh
thoughts were busily employed on h
bel, repulsed him with harshness; aga
he supplicated, and was again deni
"Nay then (cried he), there is but o
means," and he drew a stiletto from h
bosom; the eye of Montalva followe
with the quickness of lightning, the m
tion of his arm; and at the mome
when he was about to plunge the s
letto into his heart, Montalva arrest
the blow.

"Miscreant! (exclaimed he), wh
could tempt thee to this atrocious act

"What tempts many to similar dee
(replied the assassin, sullenly)—povert
brought up to the prospect of a splend
inheritance, of which one rash act h
deprived me, I perish for want; but

friendly hand is held out to succour or to save me; I thought I could have perished ere I could have stooped to beg relief, yet I was mistaken; I did beg it, and it was denied me."

Montalva's eyes were rivetted upon the face of his intended murderer; his features, which were strongly marked, bore the traces of care and disappointment; and the fire of despair sparkled in his eye.

"Thy life (cried the signor), is forfeited to the laws of Naples, and thou hast deserved to lose it; yet I wish to spare thee."

"I will not thank you for your intended mercy, signor (replied the stranger), to me 'tis cruelty; life, to a wretch who has no means to support it, is a gift not worth accepting; pursue, therefore, the advantage which my folly has given thee, and deliver me into the hands of justice."

"I would fain know thy story (cried Montalva); perhaps I may befriend thee;

but be sincere; the slightest deviation from truth will for ever lose thee my favour."

"Your caution is needless, signo[redacted] (said he, proudly); after what is past, [redacted] can have no wish to conceal from yo[redacted] any thing I have ever done; but diss[redacted] mulation (added he, sarcastically), [redacted]s natural to man, and therefore I am not surprised at your suspecting me."

CHAPTER XIII.

"My birth is noble, but the name of my family, signor, you must excuse my divulging; the patrimony I inherited from my parents, was small; but a maiden aunt, whose fortune was immense, adopted me; and from an early age, I was considered as her heir; I had the usual faults of young men, but my partial aunt saw them not; and to her blind indulgence, I owe all my misfortunes. The death of my father placed my little fortune in my own power, and I soon dissipated it in riot and extravagance. Though my aunt had avowed that I was

to be her heir, she did not, large
her fortune was, make me an allowan
sufficient for my rank; and the habit
dissipation, which I had acquired, b
came my torment, when I lost the mea
of supporting it. A young Frenchma
who was one of the companions of m
idle hours, advised me to have recour
to a jew; who would, he said, supply
me with money; but on the most exor
bitant terms. To that I was indifferent
the death of my aunt would put me i
possession of immense wealth, and fro
her time of life it was an event whic
I thought must soon happen; I therefor
told my friend that I was willing t
agree to any terms that the usurer migh
demand, and he took me to the hous
of the jew, who was named Isaac Mer
dez; with the most fawning civility the
extortioner offered me any money I
wanted, and in an evil hour I borrowed
a large sum.

I fully intended to be more prudent
in my expenditure, than I had yet been,

and I hoped that the money thus obtained, would last me till I had the means to satisfy my creditor; but I knew little of my own heart, and less of the temptations to which I should be exposed. When my friends, as they stiled themselves, were informed of the means by which I became possessed of money to continue the career of dissipation which I had begun, schemes of pleasure were daily proposed, which I had not the resolution to object to, and my money wasted rapidly.

In an excursion which I made a few miles from Naples, I was struck with the appearance of a small neat dwelling, embosomed in a grove; it appeared too humble to be the abode of affluence, and and yet too good to be inhabited by the children of poverty. Fatigue and heat had rendered me thirsty, and I determined to try whether the tenant of this lovely spot would afford me rest and refreshment. An aged domestic opened the rustic gate, and courteously invited

me to enter; he placed wine and refres
ments before me; when I had satisfi
my thirst, I asked him, who inhabit
the cottage besides himself.

"Two ladies, signor, whom I ha
the honour to serve," (was his repl
and as he spoke, they entered. I ro
and apologized for my intrusion.

"You are welcome, signor, (said th
eldest), to what our cottage affords;
fare, though homely, may be acceptab
to a weary traveller."

While I replied to this speech,
gazed attentively on the signora; she w
upwards of fifty, but never did I beho
a form so noble or so dignified; time h
indeed stolen from her cheek its fre
ness, and from her eye some portion
its lustre; but he had no power o
the graces of her countenance, and h
figure was symmetry itself.

In thanking the signora for her ho
pitality, I requested permission to r
a few minutes longer; which she read
granted. Her young companion n

spoke to the domestic, and the melody of her voice attracted my attention; her figure was small, but beautifully formed; and her countenance, though not striking, was rendered inexpressibly interesting, by the most expressive dark blue eyes I ever beheld.

"Retire to your chamber, Viola, and finish the drawing which you began this morning," (said the elder signora); and the fair Viola, timidly bowing to me, retired. Notwithstanding the noble frankness of the signora's air and manner, there was a dignity about her that forbade familiarity, and after I had rested for a short time, I again thanked her and retired.

"Strange, (thought I), that two women, whose appearance bespeaks them of a rank far superior to the vulgar, should be the inhabitants of so recluse a spot. The curiosity which I felt was but of short duration; new schemes of pleasure put the adventure out of my thoughts, and in a few days it was forgotten.

Want of money soon drove me again to the house of Isaac Mendez, and I found him as ready as before to accommodate me, but what was my surprise at beholding Viola under his roof; I almost thought my eyes deceived me, but the heightened colour of Viola, and the timid glance of recognition which she cast at me, convinced me I was right; she quitted the room, and I asked Mendez, carelessly, whether she was any relation?

"'None (replied he); she is my ward;' and he tried to change the subject; but my curiosity was now so much raised, that I was determined to gratify it if I could; I therefore mentioned to the jew my having before seen Viola at the cottage, and expressed the surprise I felt at seeing her in so obscure a situation. 'She then resided with her aunt, Signora Velloni, (cried he), but the signora has quitted Naples, and Viola is entrusted to my guardianship, 'till her return.'

"Will her absence from Naples be of long continuance, said I?

"'Tis uncertain,' (replied he); and as I could not press the subject further, it dropped.

"Again did I agree to pay the most extravagant price for the money I received, and again it was squandered in the wildest dissipation; a third visit to Mendez became necessary, but he did not receive me as he had done when I went to borrow from him before."

"'This sum, signor (cried he, when I had told him what I wanted), and what you have had before, will make your debt to me so large, that'———

"Are you not certain of being amply repaid, interrupted I.

"'How *can* I be certain of it, signor, cried he), your aunt may outlive you, or if she does not, she may change her mind; and your hopes of inheriting her property may be vain.'

"I tried to persuade him that he was mistaken, and that there was not the

least probability that my aunt wo
alter her avowed resolution of bequea
ing me her fortune, but he appeared
listen to me with an air of sullen di
tisfaction. 'I cannot at this moment g
you a positive answer, signor (cried I
I am sorry that it is not in my pow
directly to oblige you, but I must n
utterly lose sight of my own interest.

"My blood boiled with indignati
when I recollected the sum I had agr
to pay him for his compliance with
demands, but I was obliged to suppres

" When can I have your positive a
wer, said I?——'I will send to you
day or two, signor, cried he; and w
this promise I was obliged to be cont
That evening I received a note wh
contained the following lines:

" ' Signor,

" ' You are in the hands of a fie
the writer of this wishes to save y
and will run every risk to do so: be
the church of St. Giovanni this even
at vespers, and you shall know more

"This note was written in a female hand, and strongly excited both my curiosity and surprise; I repaired before vespers to the church of St. Giovanni, and knelt on purpose in a conspicuous place. When vespers were over, I lingered for some time, but I was not accosted by any one, and I was about to quit the church, persuaded that the writer of the note meant only to trifle with my curiosity; when a female, veiled, touched my arm; I turned round, and she motioned me to follow her; she walked forward with quickness, 'till we were clear of the crowd that had left the church with us, and she then stopped: I could perceive that she trembled.

"'A wish to save you from a snare the most diabolical, has brought me here, signor,' said she, in a low and tremulous voice, which I thought I had heard before. She paused a moment, and then continued, 'You are indebted to the Jew Mendez.'

"Ha! what of him, interrupted I?

"'He seeks your ruin, (cried she); a[illegible] o[illegible] without this warning, he would mo[illegible] s[illegible] probably have accomplished it: he mea[illegible] s to-morrow to send for you, and tell yo[illegible] u that he will let you have the money, if you will sign a bond to repay it upo[illegible] n terms more exorbitant than any he h[illegible] s yet asked you; should you agree t[illegible] o this, which he has not a doubt that yo[illegible] u will, he means to substitute a bond i[illegible] n the place of the one you have read, b[illegible] y which he will become possessed of you[illegible] r aunt's whole fortune, after her decease.'

"What unparalleled villainy! exclaimed I: 'Warned as you are, signor, (said she), you will find it easy to escape, but sure destruction awaits me, if you own that you are aware of his design.'

"Trust me, my kind preserver, that I will not; and now, may I beg to know to whom I am indebted for my safety? said I.

"After what I have told you, signor, (cried she), I need not hesitate to own

to you who I am. Have you forgotten your chance-meeting with Viola?"

"Viola, generous girl! (cried I), but how is it that you are an inmate with this monster?

"'My story is too long to tell you now, signor, nor dare I longer delay returning home; I wish most anxiously to escape from Mendez, but friendless as I am, I know not where to go, said she.

"Will you suffer me to procure you an asylum, cried I?—I swear to you on my honour, that I will protect you with my life.

"'We will speak of this at a future time, signor, (said she), but how do you mean to evade the usurer's demand?'

"There is but one way, returned I,—I must pretend that I have raised the money elsewhere; but I cannot part with you 'till I know by what means I may learn your story, and how I can be of service to you.

"'If you will be at Mendez's garden gate to-morrow night, at the hour of midnight, signor, (cried she), you shall know all, but now I must leave you.'

"I promised to be punctual the following night, and we parted."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

MONTALVA, &c.

VOL. II.

MONTALVA;

OR

ANNALS OF GUILT.

A TALE.

BY A. HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF THE IRISHMAN IN LONDON.

The image of a wicked, heinous fault
Lives in his eye; that close aspect of his,
Does show the mood of a most troubled breast.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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MONTALVA, &c.

CHAP. I.

"VIOLA, and the service she had done me, occupied my thoughts till we met again. I took care to be at the garden gate by the appointed time; in a few minutes it was opened, and Viola appeared. 'Follow me, signor,' (said she, in a low tone;) I did so, and she led me to an arbour, which we entered.

"'Here we are safe for some time, (cried she). Mindez, I know, has not sent to you; he thinks that the delay of a few days will make you more anxi-

ous for the money; he waits, there to see if you will send to him.'

" 'Thanks to you, my kind V (said I), his schemes will fail; but I all impatience to know your story.'

" 'It is briefly this, signor (rep she). I am an orphan, and have friend but the lady whom you saw, who is my aunt. Under her protec I lived happily, from the time I lost parents till about a year back, when husband, the Signor Velloni, happe to have an affair of honour with the of one of the most powerful of Neapolitan nobles; he had the mis tune to kill his antagonist, and in co quence was obliged to fly. His prop was confiscated; but my aunt's frie procured her a small pension, we retired to the cottage where you us. Signora Velloni had reason to s pose that in time her husband's fort would be restored, and during his e she sent him the greatest part of l pension. My little portion I had

peatedly begged her to use, but this she declined doing, and no entreaties could prevail upon her to accept of it. Passionately fond of his wife, the signor languished for her society, and in order to raise the means of going to him, my aunt applied to Mendez for money; he at first did not seem willing to accommodate her, but in a little time he consented to let her have the sum she wanted; and in a few days after he had agreed to do so, he came one morning with the greatest satisfaction in his countenance.

"'I am happy to tell you (cried he to my aunt), that there is scarcely a doubt, if the business is properly followed up, that the Signor Velloni will have his fortune restored. The Countess Strozzi has promised me to use all her influence (which is very considerable) to effect this point; but it would be necessary, signora, for you to pay particular attention to the countess, and to see her often.'

" 'Then I must renounce my project of going to my husband (answered she); but that will be a small sacrifice, if I can, by doing so, obtain for him that fortune, which we thought for ever forfeited. When, sir, can you let me have the money? I will remit it, and explain to the signor my reasons for not being myself the bearer of it.'

" 'You should have had it before, signora (cried he), but that I had much to pay. I shall, however, get it for you in a very few days.'

" With this promise she was obliged to be content. The next day an express arrived from my uncle; he was dangerously ill. We sent for Mendez, and my aunt told him the circumstance. 'If you can raise me the money immediately (cried she), it will be of material service to me; but if not, I must go without it. No consideration shall keep me from my husband.'

" 'I will bring it to you this evening,' (cried he); and so indeed he did. 'I

have thought of a means, signora (said he, as he entered), that may serve the signor as effectually as your stopping here. Nothing can be done with the Countess Strozzi without flattery and attention; I know her influence, and I know that she is disposed to exert it. Suppose you leave the Signora Viola at Naples. She can see the countess often, and——'

"'But under what protection can I leave her (cried my aunt)? my friends, or rather those who called themselves my friends, behaved with such unfeeling coldness at the time of the signor's flight, that I know not any of them whom I would ask to take charge of my niece; I can, it is true, place her in a convent, but——'

"'I could name an asylum secure, but humble (said Mendez), if you would condescend to accept it for the signora till your return; and one where she would have frequent access to the countess. I mean my house. I have a

sister who lives with me (continued he, perceiving my aunt's surprise); she would, I know, be most happy to pay the signora every attention. I am just now very necessary to the Countess Strozzi, who visits me frequently, and should the signora honour my humble roof, it is more than probable she may, in a short time, exchange it for the countess's, since I am certain that she would soon be one of that lady's first favourites.'

"My aunt thanked him, and desired a few hours to consider of the proposal. He promised to call in the morning to know her determination, and then took his leave.

"Nothing could be apparently more sincere than his wish to serve us; and my aunt was possessed of too much toleration to view him with an eye of prejudice, because he was not a christian. His influence too with some of the highest classes of our nobility, was well known to her, and after mature deli-

beration, she resolved to consent to his proposal, if I agreed, and if we both thought that his sister was such a woman as I could be happy with till my aunt's return. She communicated her determination to me, and I assured her that I had no will but hers.

"In the morning Mendez came again; and on my aunt's expressing a wish to see his sister, he begged we would accompany him to his house. We did so, and we were both highly gratified by the appearance of his sister. In short, my aunt consented to my remaining under his protection, and that very day I removed to his house, as she was impatient to begin her journey. I had supposed that as soon as I became Mendez's inmate, he would have introduced me to the countess, and I was surprised when three days passed without his mentioning her. On the fourth, I asked when I was to see her; he told me she was at her villa, a few miles from Naples; but that he

every day expected her return. A sh
tim..., however, discovered to me th
he had deceived us, for the purpose
getting me into his power; and I ha
reason to suppose that he forged t
account we received of my uncle's i
ness, in order to induce my aunt to lea
Naples. He dared to insult me by
offer of his hand, and on my rejecti
of it, he insolently avowed a determi
tion that I should be his. The wom
who passed for his sister was in reali
hired by him, in order to induce m
aunt the more readily to intrust me
his protection. I found from her
degree of sympathy and kindness whi
I had not expected, and when, in co
sequence of my overhearing the pl
laid for your ruin, I pressed her to ass
in saving you, she readily consente
She is ordered to confine me strictl
but she relied on my promise of not e
deavouring to escape, and allowed m
to meet you."

"'Ten thousand thanks for your kin

ness (replied I); but surely you do not intend to remain in the power of this wretch.'

"'No, signor (answered she); I hope in time to persuade Fiametta to suffer me to fly, and to accompany me. If she does, I will take refuge in a convent till I can hear from my aunt, who has left my little fortune in my own possession. I shall not, therefore be distressed, if I can escape.'

"'I shall be unhappy (cried I) till I know that you are out of the power of this monster. May I hope that you will sometimes permit me to see you?'

"After some hesitation Violetta granted my request, and told me that she would write me word when she could again see me. I returned home with my thoughts filled with her story and situation, and my own fortunate escape. In two days Mendez came to me.

"'Well, signor (said he), I shall now, I think, be able to oblige you. It gave me pain to refuse you, but you

it was utterly out of my power to a vance the money; now I can do it, an ——' I wish (said I, interruptin him), that you could have done it be fore. Now it is too late to be of servic to me. I was obliged to have recours to a friend, who has lent me what wanted.'

" He looked thunderstruck. — ' have put myself to considerable incor venience to procure it for you, signc (cried he); do you mean to say th you will not borrow it?'

" 'I am sorry to have occasioned yc trouble (said I), but as I do not wa it, and as my debt to you is already large, it would be folly to add to it.'

" He made no reply, but he quitt me (with an expression of suppress rage in his countenance, which I did n appear to notice). The next day I h a note from Viola, which contained appointment to meet her at the garde gate. She was not able to give me an intelligence of Mendez, but she tol

me that she hoped speedily to persuade Fiametta to liberate her, and to be the companion of her flight.

"Our interview was long, and I could not refrain from some professions of admiration, which Viola listened to with a blushing timidity, that rendered her, in my eyes, more lovely than I had ever before thought her. At parting, she promised to let me know as soon as she had settled her plan of escape.

"My situation now was a most unpleasant one; harrassed for money, which I had no means to raise, and not daring to apply to my aunt, lest my extravagance might injure me in her opinion. To add to my perplexities, Mendez, to my utter astonishment, sent to me for his money. I reminded him, that by the terms of our agreement he was not to be paid till my aunt's decease, and for a few days I heard no more from him. Just as I had begun to congratulate myself on

getting rid of the business, he came to me one morning.

" 'I am at present much distressed, signor (cried he), and if you cannot let me have the sum due to me, I must apply to your aunt; probably she may liquidate the debt.'

" I besought his forbearance, but for some time in vain; at last he promised to allow me a few days to make up the money; but he peremptorily declared that he must have it in a given time, and he left me. For some time after his departure, I traversed my apartment in an agony, which I had never experienced before. At one moment I resolved to tell my aunt all, and the next I shrunk from a step, which would most probably occasion my ruin. While my mind was in this state, I received a note from Viola, containing a request to see me that night, as she had something of consequence to say to me. I was punctual to the time, and Viola informed me, that she knew

Mendez had pressed me for the money, and that she feared a wish to be revenged on me for the disappointment I had occasioned him, would make him apply to my aunt. 'Pardon me, signor (continued she, blushing), but from what Mendez said, I thought it might be inconvenient to you to settle with him. Should that be the case, perhaps it might be in my power to be of some service to you. My little fortune is at my own disposal, and if any part of it can be of use in this affair, you may command it freely.'

"I thanked the generous Viola in the warmest terms, but I declined accepting her offer; she was, however, peremptory in pressing it; she represented to me that it was but exchanging one creditor for another, and that if I did not do so, my aunt must inevitably know all, that I was so much interested to conceal from her. She added, that Fiametta had at last consented to her

escape, and had agreed to accompa
her.

" The beauty and generosity of t
lovely girl sensibly touched me, and
told her that, upon one condition,
was willing to become her debtor.
' Situated as I now am (signora, cri
I), I cannot ask you to accept my han
but if you thought me worthy of yo
esteem, and would promise hereafter
become mine; my aunt's health is pr
carious, and from that circumstan
and her time of life, her dissoluti
may be speedily looked for; and wh
transport would it give me to repay r
beloved Viola, by sharing with her t
noble fortune of which I shall th
become possessed.'

" The blushes and the downcast ey
of Viola convinced me that my prop
sal was not displeasing to her; ar
after some hesitation, she agreed to
I found out a retreat, which, thou
humble, was not devoid of comfort, a

thither, in a few days, she fled, accompanied by Fiametta. The sum which I wanted to discharge the usurer's debt was, as I afterwards learned, nearly the whole of what my Viola possessed. She gave it to me chearfully, and I discharged the debt, much to the surprise of Mendez.

" My aunt grew daily weaker, and I own I anticipated with pleasure, that the time would soon arrive when I could reward the generous conduct of my Viola, whom I now visited almost daily, and of whom every hour rendered me more enamoured. In an accursed moment, heated with wine, I presumed upon her apparent fondness, to take liberties, which she ought to have repulsed with indignation; she did not repulse them, and her compliance with my desires plunged us both into misery.

" I soothed the mind of Viola with assurances of eternal love and constancy; but in my heart I solemnly abjured

the thought of making her my wife; to return tenfold the pecuniary obligation I was under to her, and to love and protect her, as a mistress, I was resolved; but to marry her, after what had passed, was impossible. I still continued to visit her as frequently as ever, for my inclination for her person rather increased than diminished; but our connection had a consequence which, though natural, I had not foreseen: she proved with child; and when she revealed the circumstance to me, she claimed, though in the most gentle terms, my promise to make her mine by the rights of the church. I pleaded the ruin that would attend us both, if the marriage was discovered; but Viola, who had hitherto appeared the gentlest of her sex, and whom I thought I could at any time persuade into a compliance with my wishes, whatever they might be, now firmly insisted on my making her my wife. It was, she said, the only way to save her from that disgrace

which must otherwise overwhelm her. After endeavouring in vain to evade an immediate compliance with her request, I was obliged positively to refuse her, and we parted, for the first time, in anger.

"When I again visited her, I saw only Fiametta, who told me that Viola was ill; I desired to see her instantly. 'Pardon me, signor, (cried she), but before you do, have you made up your mind to grant her request?'

"'Nay, (continued she, seeing me look surprised) it was impossible for the signora to keep her situation a secret from me; and why indeed should she try to do so, since a confidant would be necessary, and she has experienced my fidelity.'

"I began to use to Fiametta the same arguments which I had before tried with Viola, but she did not allow me to proceed.

"'Your marriage may be kept secret as long as you please, signor (said she),

my lady does not object to that, but he honour must be repaired, and you child must be legitimated. Ask you own heart, signor, whether Viola is no entitled to *justice*, and she asks n more."

" 'She seeks our mutual ruin, (crie I, passionately), and I must be a mad man to consent to it.'

" 'You are then determined not t marry the signora?' (said Fiametta).

" 'She knows that I cannot immed ately,' (answered I).

" 'But you will not object to give h a written promise to do so at the deat of your aunt?' (cried Fiametta.)

"This was a question for which I w not prepared, and I hesitated, for, t say the truth, I knew not how to an swer it.

" 'Oh! my poor deceived lady, (cried Fiametta), I see too plainly you have undone yourself; yet if a spark of honour, of humanity, remains in your breast, signor, save her, I conjure you,

from that ruin which your breach of faith will bring upon her. Keenly susceptible as her nature is, the agonies that she suffers would move any heart not callous, and can you, signor, reflect, without pity, that you are the cause of them?'

"I was touched with the manner in which Fiametta spoke; but could I make a wanton the legal partner of my bed? No; honour forbade that sacrifice, and I was compelled to refuse Viola the promise she demanded.

"Fiametta heard me with calmness, and left me without a reply; I had supposed that the matter would have ended there, and that, finding me inflexible, Viola would at length agree to continue mine on my own terms; for I yet loved her too well to think willingly of giving her up. Fool that I was; I knew not the nature of the sex; I knew not the lengths to which an offended woman's resentment will carry her. Instigated by Fiametta, Viola revealed the whole

to my aunt, who sent for me, and after the bitterest reproaches, enquired whether I was prepared to do the injured girl justice.

"My love for Viola was now converted into hatred, and I think, that sooner than have espoused her, I would have put a period to my existence. My aunt ordered me never again to appear in her presence, and immediately took Viola, who was then dangerously ill from a miscarriage, under her protection; from that moment I was banished from her affection and her house; and the only condition on which I could regain her favour, was, she assured me, my marriage with Viola.

"'Then I must be for ever an alien, (cried I), for I will perish sooner than espouse her.'

"My allowance was withdrawn, and penury and disappointment together influenced me to take the desperate step which has placed me in your house. I have now, signor, gratified

he curiosity you expressed, and am
ady to surrender myself into the hands
f justice."

Montalva had listened attentively to
s tale; in him he thought he had met
ith a fit instrument for his purpose,
d he affected to compassionate his
isfortunes.

"I will not give you up to those
ws you have offended, (said he), on
e contrary, I feel inclined to serve
u; I want a secretary, and if I could
certain of your fidelity——"

"Signor (interrupted the man), after
hat has passed, you have not, I own,
uch reason to credit my professions;
will not, therefore, make many; if
ou are indeed inclined to be my friend,
ust me, you shall have no reason to
mplain of want of gratitude."

"Well, (replied Montalva), I will
ust you; but on one condition, that
ou will acquaint me truly with your
irth and family."

"The condition is a hard one, (cried

he), but it shall be complied with; my name is Anselmo Di ——, and my family——"

"I know is noble, (interrupted Montalva); come to-morrow to my Palazza, and we will talk further."

He then gave Anselmo his direction, and they parted.

"This man will suit my purpose well, (thought Montalva); but if he should betray me? Pshaw! why should I think he will? gold, all powerful gold, will secure his fidelity; and, once possessed of the rich domains of D'Rosonio, I shall have amply the means to bribe him to silence."

The following morning, Anselmo waited upon him, and Montalva took him immediately as his secretary. Some time elapsed before the signor gave to Anselmo the most distant hint of his intentions respecting Isabel; but he longed most impatiently for the time when he could strip the innocent orphan of her rights; the remorse which

he could not help feeling for the mur-
der of D'Rosonio, he flattered himself
would be obliterated by time; and in
he possession of wealth, and the en-
oyments which it would procure him,
e fancied that he should be happy.

CHAP. II.

MONTALVA ventured slowly to give to Anselmo an idea that he wished to possess the inheritance of Isabel, but timidity and distrust, the inseparable companions of guilt, prevented him for a long time from being explicit; at length he ventured fully to disclose his wishes to Anselmo, who met them half-way.

"I am certain, (cried the artful Montalva), that I do no wrong to the memory of my late dear friend. I know from circumstances that the countess was unfaithful; and much do I doubt whether Isabel is really the child of D'Rosonio."

This pretence was too poor to impose upon Anselmo; but he seemed to be persuaded that the signor spoke the truth.

"It is indeed a pity that this infant should stand between you and so noble an inheritance; she must be removed."

"But how, Anselmo?" (cried Montalva).

"That, signor (said he), demands consideration."

"You will observe, Anselmo, (said Montalva), Isabel's *life* must be *sacred*."

"Heaven forbid that I should wish it otherwise, (said Anselmo); if we can devise any means to make the world suppose her dead, our point will be gained; and if you will allow me, signor, I dare say that I can soon think of some plan that will give you the domains of D'Rosonio, and consign Isabel to obscurity."

Montalva thanked his confidant, who in a few days afterwards proposed to him to give Isabel a sleeping draught,

and when the domestics were persua
of her death, he observed, that it wo
be easy to remove her from Naples,
place her in safety in some obscure
tuation, where her birth could never
discovered, and where she might
for an orphan, dependent upon
bounty of Montalva, whose name
condition it would be easy to concea

When Anselmo related his projec
Montalva, the signor execrated his
folly in not thinking of it himself
plan at once so simple, and so sec
would have been easy, of execut
without a confidant; "and the se
(thought he) would still have been
own."

He readily agreed to Anselmo's
posal. A powerful soporific gave to
little Isabel a death-like slumber, t
imposed upon all who saw her. In
night before her funeral obsequies w
to be performed, Montalva and An
mo removed her from the magnific
coffin in which she had been laid,

Anselmo secreted himself with her at a cottage, some miles from Naples, for a few days, till he was joined by Montalva, who determined to take the little orphan to a convent at a considerable distance.

"There (said he, mentally) she will be safe; and, if it is not her own fault, she may be happy." "And what right hast thou to be the arbiter of her destiny," whispered conscience, but her voice was disregarded, and the wretched Montalva, in adding crime to crime, dared to look forward to the future, and to hope for peace.

Montalva fabricated a story which he thought would answer his purpose. He represented Isabel as an orphan destitute of fortune, and solely dependant on the bounty of a relation, who intended her, at a proper age, to take the veil; he paid five years' pension in advance, and received from the lady abbess every assurance that she should meet with the kindest treatment.

The abbess of St. Teresa, was truly an honour to the religion that she professed. Early disappointments had induced her to chuse a monastic life; and, in the duties of religion, she found consolation for the perfidy of a man whom she had adored. Her sublime piety, and her unaffected meekness and humanity, made her equally beloved and venerated by the sisterhood; and, at a very early age, she attained the rank of superior, an office which she filled equally to her own credit, and the satisfaction of her daughters, whom she treated as if they were indeed her children.

When Montalva presented the little Isabel to her, she embraced the child with a mother's tenderness, and Isabel returned her caresses with all the ingenious simplicity of childhood.

"It may be years before you again see me (cried Montalva to the lady abbess), but I will take care that Isabel's pension shall always be paid in advance;

l you, holy mother, will impress
›n her mind, at an early age, that she
ntended for a monastic life; it will
eed, from her education, be most pro-
›ly the one that she would prefer."
The abbess promised to follow his in-
ıctions, and he set out on his return
Naples. On the second day of his
rney, Anselmo was taken suddenly
and in a few hours was unable to pro-
d; Montalva himself attended him
h the most anxious care. "How
›d, how humane, is this signor (cried
: inn-keeper), with what watchful
ıdness he hovers over his poor sick
vant!" Alas! how little able are
to judge the real motives of human
ions! Humanity had no share in the
entions which Montalva lavished on
secretary; he dreaded that remorse
uld force his secret from the lips of
selmo, and this apprehension was
cause of his apparent kindness; his
rs, however, were vain, in a few hours
selmo expired, and, from the mo-

ment they had stopped at the inn Montalva had never quitted him.

"The secret (cries Montalva, exultingly), is now my own; every bar to my happiness is removed, and I will quaff the cup of pleasure, and enjoy the riches of which I am possessed."

Such were the resolutions of Montalva, but he had yet to learn that neither the possession of riches, nor sensual enjoyments, can stop the voice of conscience. He had flattered himself that Isabel once removed, the uneasiness of his mind would subside but his unhappiness every day increased and while seated at the festive board surrounded by the most beautiful courtezans in Naples, the spirit of his murdered friend seemed to menace him with that punishment which his crime had deserved.

On the supposed death of Isabel, he had taken the title of count, and many were the overtures of marriage made him by the noblest families in Naples

but the soul of Montalva was unfitted for the enjoyment of domestic happiness, and those motives which formerly would have urged him to a mercenary marriage, had ceased to exist; he reflected with bitterness, that it was not himself, but his rank and riches that made the Neapolitan dames desirous of an alliance with him.

"While I was the untitled and the poor Montalva, I sought in vain for a rich wife (thought he), but now, when rank and wealth are mine, I am courted by those who turned from me formerly with disdain. Oh! gold, thou all powerful demon, at what a price have I purchased the possession of thee!"

His thoughts now reverted to Bianca, the original cause of his sufferings and his guilt; from the time she had refused him, and quitted Naples, he had never heard of her, and the love of revenge, which was a predominant *trait* in his character, had at times excited him to endeavour to discover the place of her

retreat, but every enquiry that he had hitherto made was fruitless.

Some years passed away, and the torments of his mind daily increased, till his existence became burthensome to himself. His company was no longer courted by the sons of riot and dissipation, and meretricious beauty turned from his harsh and ungentle manners with disgust; he resolved to hide from the world that wretchedness which he could not conceal from himself, and he quitted the gaieties of Naples for the solitude of the castle D'Rosonio. He had regularly remitted in advance the pension of the little Isabel, but he determined never to behold her again. Soon after he had placed her in the convent of St. Teresa, he had discharged the domestics who, for years, had served the family of D'Rosonio, and replaced them with others, to whom all former transactions at the castle were unknown; different indeed was the scene which its pompous hall now pre-

sented, to what they had formerly exhibited; the cheerful hospitality, the unbounded munificence of the late Count D'Rosonio, died with him; haughty, gloomy, and tyrannical, the conduct of his successor, rendered him feared by his domestics, and abhored by his vassals.

CHAP. III.

SOLITUDE, so delightful to the go is beyond measure irksome to t wicked; this truth the unhappy Mo talva daily experienced. Every obje at the castle D'Rosonio recalled to hi memory his murdered friend; he re solved to travel—and he quitted th castle in search of that peace he wa destined never more to taste.

Madrid was the first place that h meant to visit, and he arrived ther in safety. Change of scene had som little effect upon his spirits, and h endeavoured (by viewing the variou

things so worthy of a traveller's attention in the capital of Spain) to dispel the bitter reflections which still preyed upon his mind. One evening, as he returned from vespers, he strolled along heedlessly, till he got to some distance from the city; and when he would have retraced his steps, he found himself puzzled by the intricacy of the path; a small cottage appeared at some distance, and he hastened to it to enquire his way; there was no person in it, and he sat down by a cheerful fire, which blazed on the humble hearth, to wait the return of its owner. In a few moments a woman appeared; she started at seeing him, but when he told her what he wanted, she desired that he would wait the arrival of her husband, whom she expected every moment, and who would accompany him a part of the way, for she was, she said, unable to direct him. Montalva consented, and his hostess busied herself in preparing sup-

per. His walk had given the count an appetite, and he looked with a longing eye upon Teresa's rustic fare.

"I could wish our humble supper was such as you could partake of, sir (said she), but it is too homely to tempt your appetite."

Montalva replied in the negative and Teresa flew to cover the board with part of the provisions prepared for her husband and son. Never had repast appeared more luxurious to the count for never before had he tasted a meal sweetened by so keen an appetite. In a little time, Teresa began to wonder that her husband was not yet returned.

"I can't think (said she, anxiously), what can delay Jacques, I never knew him so late." While she spoke, he entered. He was accompanied by his son, a youth of about nineteen. "Oh, you are come at last, Jacques (cried his wife), in truth I began to be sadly

frightened! what can have detained you?"

Jacques and his son saluted the count, respectfully, and the former said, "Let us have some supper, Teresa, and then I will tell you our adventure."

"Nay, prithee, tell me now" (cried she). "My hunger must be satisfied before your curiosity, wife," (replied he), and placing himself at the board, he began his meal with heartiness.

"And now, wife, (said he, when they had nearly finished their supper), Saint Francis be praised, Tomaso has saved the life of our neighbour's son, Vincentio."

"What! that wretch (cried she), who has occasioned so much mischief, and done us, in particular, so much harm? In good faith, I would not have saved him, for many there are that would have rejoiced at his death."

"Wife, wife (cried Jacques), would you then suffer a fellow-being to perish

for want of succour, before your eyes, because he had injured you? No, Teresa, thou speakest not as thou wouldst act. But mothers, sir (said he, turning to Montalva); cannot forgive those who injure their children; Vincentio was married but a few weeks since, to a maiden whom we hoped to have seen the wife of our Tomaso. My boy deeply regretted the loss of his Ursula, and Teresa shares her son's grief, and his resentment."

Montalva cast his eyes upon the young man; his countenance bore the traces of dejection, and the agitation which he shewed at the mention of his mistress, proved that she was still dear to him. That a man should save the life of his rival, was a species of generosity which the count could not comprehend, and he desired to hear the tale.

"I will relate it to you, sir (said Jacques); but you, Tomaso, had best retire to bed; your clothes are scarcely

dry, and you must, I think, feel fatigued."

Teresa laid her hand upon the arm of her son; she found, what she had not before observed, that his clothes were very wet; and, exclaiming that he must have caught his death, she hurried him from the room.

"From his early youth, sir (said Jacques, addressing Montalva), my poor boy loved Ursula, and she returned his passion. Her parents, like ourselves, are peasants, and they approved of the young people's regard for each other. We agreed that, when they came to a proper age, they should be married; and Tomaso, who was always a good and dutiful boy, laboured incessantly, in order, as he said, to shew me how capable he was of supporting Ursula. We were content, and the young folks happy in the prospect of their approaching union, when the family of Vincentio came to settle in our neighbourhood.

"Vincentio soon paid particular attention to Ursula, who is indeed the prettiest and the best girl for many miles round; but though Vincentio is handsome, and bought her many things, such as my son could not afford to purchase, she listened to him with indifference, and refused to accept any of his presents; her parents, however, were mercenary, and they scolded poor Ursula severely for her behaviour to him; she pleaded her engagement to my son, but her mother declared that she would never consent to her marrying Tomaso, if she could get a better match, and that if Ursula would but behave differently to Vincentio, there was little doubt that he would make her an offer of marriage; and poor Ursula, from a fear that he should, did all that she could to disgust him by her coldness; but in vain. He asked her hand from her parents, and they commanded her to accept him for her husband. Ursula had

ver in her whole life disobeyed their
shes, but now she thought that it
ould be almost criminal to obey them.
er vows were plighted to my son,
d for some time she steadily refused
break them. At last, her mother
l sick, or rather, I believe (heaven
rgive me), pretended to be sick, and
e persuaded Ursula that her recovery
pended upon the poor girl's marrying
ncentio; she promised that she
uld, on condition that she was al-
wed to come and tell us the cause of
r doing so; her mother at first re-
sed, but Ursula would not consent
on any other terms, and she was
ffered to see us for the last time.

" She had not been in our cottage
some months, and my wife was re-
ced to see her. 'Ursula, my dear
ild (cried she), how welcome you
. I hope you have brought us good
ws—Oh! how I wish that Tomaso
s here.'

" I saw by Ursula's countenance

that there was no cause for joy, but was shocked when, at the mention of my son, she turned as pale as ash and burst into tears.

" ' Oh, my mother (cried she t Teresa), I am come to you for the la time—in a few days I am to be mar ried.'

" ' Well (said my wife, hastily), yo had no need to be yourself the messenge of this news, we should have known i soon enough; my poor Tomaso de served a more constant heart—but Vin centio's riches may not make you hap pier than you might have been with my son.'

" I stopped my wife, for I saw the distress of poor Ursula, and I thought that she could not be to blame; and, indeed, when she told us how matter were, we both acknowledged that she could not act otherwise than she did.

" ' I would see you once more (cried she), that I might tell you all, and that I might beg of you to tell Tomaso—'

Her voice faltered, and she could not proceed.

"We embraced, and endeavoured to comfort her; she staid with us for some time, and would have remained longer, but from a fear of meeting my son. In the evening Tomaso returned; he seemed more cheerful than he had been for some time, and I felt very loth to wound him with the cruel news, but yet it was necessary that he should know it; his countenance changed several times while I was speaking, and when I had finished he remained silent. I would rather he had appeared more agitated, for I dreaded the effects of the deep despair, which was visible in his eyes, I tried to rouse him.

"'Tomaso (said I), for my sake and your mother's, do not thus despond, be more a man.'

"'Not for myself, father (cried he), but for her do I grieve. Oh! may heaven give her strength to bear this

"I a few days afterwards, the news of Ursula's marriage reached us, and from that time to the present, which is now some weeks, we have never seen her. My son strove all that he could to prevent our seeing the impression which the loss of her made upon his mind; but, alas! it was too plain. To-day we went a few miles from hence, with some grapes that we wanted to sell, and in returning, Vincentio passed us; he was much intoxicated, so much so indeed, that he could hardly walk. He gave my son a look of scorn as he passed, and poor Tomaso sighed deeply.

"'Ah! father (said he), how hard is poor Ursula's lot; how different would it have been if'——he checked himself, and I did not pursue the subject. We loitered, for I did not wish to overtake Vincentio, who walked, or rather staggered forward till he came to a stream, where there was a plank laid across. The plank was a broad one,

ıd perfectly secure, if he had been ›ber, but in his present state, it was ery dangerous for him to attempt to ross it.

" We now hurried forward, but before we came up to him, he was more than half way over.—' He will get across with safety' (said I); but I had scarcely uttered the words, when his foot slipped, and he fell into the water.

" Tomaso is but and indifferent swimmer, but he darted forward with the rapidity of lightening, and plunged in after Vincentio: for some moments I trembled for the life of my son, for the stream was very broad and deep; but my fears were soon dispelled, by his bringing the insensible Vincentio in his arms to the opposite side. For some time we thought that Vincentio was actually dead, at last he shewed signs of life, but the fright had affected him so much, that when he recovered, he was unable to walk, and we were

obliged to support him to the nearest cottage; he recovered himself sufficiently to express his gratitude to Tomaso, and we did not leave him for some time."

Jacques ceased, but Montalva remained silent; the peasant's simple tale had indeed created the bitterest reflections in his breast, he could not but approve of the magnanimity which led the young rustic to risk his own life to preserve his rival's, but the involuntary comparison which he drew between Tomaso's conduct and his own, at once mortified his pride and stung his conscience. He started up abruptly, and haughtily desired to know, whether Jacques could shew him the road to Madrid. Jacques, with great readiness, said he would attend him, and the count with hasty steps quitted the cottage, where he had received a lesson that he was not destined soon to forget. In a short time they approached the city, and Montalva liberally re-

rded his conductor, whom he dis-
ised; Jacques would have attended
i into the town, but the count stern-
told him that he chose to proceed
ie, and the peasant quitted him with
iy thanks for the liberality which he
ngraciously bestowed.

CHAP. IV.

MONTALVA could not banish from his mind the story which he had heard at the cottage, and the more he thought of it the more troublesome the reproaches of his conscience became.

"Yet, why, (said he, mentally), should the foolish action of this romantic peasant disturb me? D'Rosonio was indeed what the world calls my friend, but he had robbed me of happiness; but for him, love and fortune would have showered upon me their choicest favours; he stept between me and both; how know I, that he did not

ek to gain the affections of the weak, avering Bianca, merely that he might ake a parade of his generosity in not ailing himself of her folly; but if I en suppose him innocent, yet was e injury to me the same; and through s means, I was destined to remain for e a beggar; could I bear such a lot? o, priestcraft may call my killing him crime, but reason tells me, that from s death only could I derive the means live."

Vainly did the count endeavour by ese and similar arguments, to stifle e emotions of remorse, which the od actions of Tomaso had so poignant- revived in his mind; he lost the easure that he had enjoyed in view- g the city, and hoping relief from ange of scene: he was about to leave when an incident happened which tained him some time longer.

Returning home late one night, he rceived two cavaliers engaged in mbat, they fought with the greatest

impetuosity, and he stopped a moment to consider whether he should interfere; he had but a moment, for the one made such a dexterous feint of retiring, that his adversary, in pressing forward, ran upon his sword and fell dead at his feet.

The moment he fell, the other hastened away, but he had received a wound in the arm, which bled profusely; and the count, who followed him, saw him in a few moments stagger, and but for Montalva he would have fallen.

"Let me support you, sir" (cried the count, catching his arm), the stranger thanked him, and readily accepted his assistance.

"I witnessed your rencontre (cried Montalva), and I regret that it has been so fatal."

"And I rejoice that I have revenged the cause of injured truth and innocence upon the vilest miscreant that ever disgraced humanity (cried the stranger): the wretch whom you saw

perish by my hand, has tried to rob me of all that rendered life desirable to me, he poisoned for months a happiness that, but for his baleful wiles, might have been termed almost celestial, and not satisfied with rendering me a prey to all the horrors of jealousy and suspense, he had almost wrought my feelings to such a pitch of phrenzy, as to make me lift my hand against the life of a beloved and innocent wife; but Providence is ever just, and the villain has at last met with his reward."

The blood, which still flowed profusely, and the exertion which he used in speaking, made the stranger so very faint, that it was with the utmost difficulty he could proceed; and the count rather carried, than supported him, till they reached a large and magnificent mansion, at which he knocked with the authority of a master; it was opened by a servant, who started with af-

fright, when he beheld the situati
of his lord.

The stranger invited Montalva to e
ter, and the count, whose curiosity w
strongly excited, followed him in
a handsome apartment, "tell t
marchioness that I am engaged (s
the stranger), and send Agnes
me;" the domestic retired, and in
few moments an old female, who a
peared something above the comm
class, entered.

"Oh! holy Mary (cried she),
what dreadful adventure has your e
cellency been engaged?"—"Ask
questions, good Agnes (said he), b
prepare to dress my arm, and r
member I charge you on your li
not to let your lady know I a
wounded."

Agnes did as the marquis desire
and though it was easy to see wh
pain the dressing of his wound ga
him, yet, he did not shrink from t

operation; when she had done it, and retired, he turned to the count.

"I have most probably to thank you for my life (said he), since without your assistance, I do not think that I could have reached my own house; when we have supped, I will relate to you all the circumstances that urged me to the act which you witnessed."

They now went into another apartment, where a magnificent supper was laid, the most exquisite viands, graced the board, and the most delicious wines, in goblets of gold, tempted the marquis and Montalva in vain; they neither did honour to the repast, which was soon concluded, and when it was over the marquis addressed Montalva as follows:—

"You see before you, sir, the Marquis de Santenos, sprung from one of the noblest families in Spain, and master of a princely fortune; I entered life with the happiest prospects; while I was yet very young, I saw and loved

Donna Maria de Guzman; neither her birth nor fortune were equal to mine, but the graces of her mind and bosom, were such as to render her a wife for an emperor: she heard my vows with complacency, and as I stood high in the favour of her relations, we were speedily united.

"For some time, nothing could exceed the felicity that I enjoyed; my Maria, at the end of a year, brought me a son; if you have ever been a father, you may conceive the pleasure which I derived from this circumstance; with what delight did I behold my wife, bending with the sweetest smiles over her infant as it received nourishment from her bosom; never did she appear so beautiful in my eyes, as when employed in the tender offices of maternal love. I had, when I first married her, believed my happiness incapable of increase, but I saw it daily augment, and I bent in fervent grati-

tude to that almighty power, who had allotted me so large a portion of bliss.

"Don Carlos de Padilla had been the friend of my youth, but accident had separated us for some years; he had travelled, and though we promised to correspond with each other, it was a promise that he did not keep; and he returned to Madrid in something more than a year after my marriage. He hastened to my house, I received him with the utmost warmth, and introduced him to Maria, as a man, whom I regarded with the affection of a brother. To be my friend, was a sufficient recommendation to the favour of my wife, and her behaviour to him was equally friendly and attentive. Don Carlos is, or rather (continued he sighing), "was, one of the handsomest men in Spain; he had the weakness and vanity to suppose that his person and accomplishments had caught the heart of my wife, and in a short time he presumed to make dishonourable overtures

to her. The marchioness, who, to the natural dignity of virtue joins the pride, inherent I believe in every noble Castillian, repulsed him with scorn and indignation; but fearful of endangering my life, she did not acquaint me with the traitor's perfidy. This well meant precaution of her's, was the source of all the uneasiness which I have since suffered; Don Carlos conceived against her the most implacable hatred, and he resolved to risk every thing in order to be revenged.

"He began by infusing into my mind a suspicion that the marchioness's love was not equal to my own; the delicate reserve of my Maria became to the jaundiced eye of jealousy, coldness and indifference; I doated upon her, and from the moment I suspected that her regard was inferior to mine, I was miserable: I became gloomy, and the marchioness wondered at, without suspecting the cause of the alteration in my behaviour.

"Amongst the number of my friends was a young Englishman, of the most engaging person and address; he had exiled himself from his own country on account of his ill success in an affair of the heart. The English are naturally a grave people, and the misfortunes of Lord Clerimont had given to his manners a seriousness, and at times, a melancholy, that was far from unpleasing to a Spaniard. The young Englishman won my friendship, and at my desire the marchioness was particularly attentive to him.

"The kindness of your lovely wife (said he to me one day), frequently opens those wounds which it is meant to heal; when I see her smiling cheerfully on your guests; when, with the benevolence of an angel, she endeavours to chace away my sorrows by the soft accents of peace and consolation, she brings to my recollection the similar virtues of that adored being whom I have for ever lost; and, for-

give me, my dear friend (continued l
grasping my hand), but though I h
myself for it, yet, at those momen
I envy your felicity."

"My heart bled for poor Clerimo
I returned the pressure of his han
and we were both silent. Don Carl
who was also present, had listened wi
an air of the most marked attention
the young Englishman, and for so
days after this conversation, I could n
help noticing, that whenever Clerimo
was with us, Don Carlos seemed
look with an eye of suspicion on l
behaviour, and that of the marchione
I too, became involuntarily attentive
the manners of both, and I could n
help fancying, that there was a pecul
softness in the marchioness's eyes a
voice, whenever she addressed hi
the artful Carlos seemed to double
vigilance with which he watched the
but to me, he preserved a profound
lence upon the subject.

"Matters continued in this state

some time, when Clerimont received a summons to his native country; he parted from us with regret, and as his going destroyed in a great measure the suspicions I had entertained, I bade him adieu with much cordiality.

"I could not hide from myself, that from the time of his departure, the behavour of the marchioness gradually changed, she became gloomy and absent, and though she strove to treat me in her usual manner, yet, the change was too evident to pass unobserved by the prying eye of love; returning one day unexpectedly, I surprised her in tears, I besought her in vain to tell me the reason why she wept.

"'My dear lord, cried she (attempting to hide her dejection under an assumed vivacity), I have no reason to be sad, but women are not always reasonable, and you must not expect that I should differ from the rest of my sex; my spirits are low, but they will be better.' I did not press her further,

but the idea I had before entertained that her dejection proceeded from Clermont's leaving us, returned. In a few days after this, I was sauntering in close walk in the garden of my house and within a few paces of me I perceived Don Carlos, he was alone, and his hurried step, and the agitation of his manner, betrayed a mind ill at ease I hastened to join him, but at the sight of me, he started, and seemed inclined to avoid me; I inquired what had disturbed him, but for a long time he evaded a reply, at last——.

" 'I know not how to answer you my friend (cried he), I am indeed disturbed, and did you know the cause you would be equally so; but for your own peace-sake, De Santenos, inquire no farther; ignorance in some cases constitutes happiness.'

" My thoughts were always fixed upon Maria's fancied coldness, and I could not help exclaiming, 'good Heaven! the marchioness is then——'

"'The marchioness (interrupted he), I did not name her surely, or if I did, 'twas unintentionally."

"These words confirmed my belief that he had discovered Maria's partiality for Clerimont, and I urged him so vehemently to come to an explanation with me, that at last, with an appearance of the greatest reluctance, he owned that he had reason to believe that the marchioness and Clerimont were mutually attached, and that his being obliged to return to England was the cause of her evident unhappiness.

"How inconsistent is the human heart. Though I had persuaded myself that this was the case, yet, I roared and stormed as if I never before had had an idea of it; I vowed that I would instantly fly to her, and upbraid her with her infamy.

"'What (cried he), before you are convinced that she is guilty? recollect that you have but my word for her infidelity, and that the strongest evidence

only, should make you doubt the l
nour of a wife.'

" 'I am convinced of her guilt (cr
I), but if I was not, what evider
can I now obtain of it? the abser
of her paramour deprives me of
chance of gaining actual proof of h
infidelity, since surely she does n
presume to correspond with him.'

" 'I know not that (replied he), b
thus far I can convince you, I can sh
you the marchioness weeping over t
portrait of her lover; but first, De Sa
tenos, you must solemnly swear to n
that you will not rush from your pla
of concealment to upbraid your guil
wife; without you will do this, I ca
not pledge myself to give you the sat
faction which you demand.'

" I thought his terms hard, but up
no other would he agree to give n
the damning proof I sought, and
bound myself by a solemn oath to
silent, whatever I might see or hear.

"'And now, De Santenos (cried he), I have to intreat your pardon, for I own to you I came by the knowledge of the marchioness's infidelity in a way that I am ashamed to tell you; the beauty of her attendant, Leonora, captivated my fancy; I ought to have respected the rights of hospitality, but human nature is frail, the girl seemed partial to me, and I had not fortitude to resist her allurements; it is now some time since she told me of the affection which her lady showed for Lord Clerimont, and from the time of his departure, the marchioness has, when alone, spent her time in weeping over a portrait which chance discovered to Leonora was that of his lordship; still your wife's love might not have led her to any criminal lengths, and never should I have suspected her of actual infidelity, but from a part of a letter which Leonora found in her lady's cabinet, and which put it beyond a

doubt that she had granted to the Englishman every favour that she had to bestow.'

"'By Heaven! (exclaimed I), she shall die; my injured honour demands the sacrifice of her life, nor shall the universe shield her paramour from my just revenge; I will pursue him to England.'

"'First obtain complete conviction of your wife's infidelity, and then take what measures you please (said he), but do nothing rashly, I beg of you. By the advice of this arch fiend, I pretended business that would, I said, detain me some few days from Madrid, and I endeavoured to disguise my feelings, and to bid the marchioness adieu with some degree of composure!

"The apparent tenderness with which she returned my embraces, struck me as the blackest dissimulation; 'vile hypocrite! (thought I), thy perfidy will soon meet with its just reward.'

"That night I returned, and Leonora

ned me so, that I could plainly
very action of the marchioness
ut being myself observed; Don
s accompanied me to prevent, as
id, any ill effects from my rash-

When the marchioness was nearly
ssed, she dismissed her woman,
s soon as she did so, she took
her cabinet a picture, which she
upon for some time in silence;
s the largest miniature I had ever
and the setting was plain gold.
Ah! (cried she, as she pressed it to
ps), time has been, when the ori-
smiled as sweetly on me as the
nate likeness appears to do;' she
into tears, and to such a pitch of
was I wound, that forgetful of
ow, I should have burst into her
ber, had not Don Carlos forcibly
ne from the spot.
He hurried me into the garden,
or some moments, I could not
ie.

" ' Are you now convinced' (cried he).

" ' Yes (replied I), and the blood of the adultress shall expiate her crime?'

" ' Not so, my friend (said he), do not rashly presume to rob offended Heaven of its power to punish.'

" ' What (exclaimed I), would you then, that she should triumph in her guilt? would you have me still cherish in my bosom a wretch who has sacrificed my honour and her own.'

" ' No' (said he), but there are modes of punishment more lenient in appearance, but as severe in reality to a guilty mind, as the one you have named; secluded from the world, and robbed of all those enjoyments to which she has been accustomed, the unhappy and guilty marchioness might, by a life of penance and austerity, expiate her faults.'

" For some time I would not listen to this plan, but at last I agreed to it; we

settled that I should the following day charge my wife with her guilt, of which the picture found in her cabinet would be sufficient evidence, and then remove her secretly to some convent at a distance from Madrid; that done, I proposed to visit England, and to execute, with my own hands, justice upon the destroyer of my honour and my peace.

"These resolutions were approved by the villain Carlos, and early the following day I entered the camber of my wife.

"She was in a sound sleep, and never had I seen her look more lovely. 'Oh, Heavens! (cried I), how can guilt so black as this woman's, taste of sweet repose?' The noise I made roused her, she started up. 'What, my dear lord (cried she), so soon returned?'

"'I am returned (replied I), to punish the perfidy of a wanton; know that I have at last discovered all.'

The steadiness of her countenance amazed me. 'I understand you not,

my lord (said she), what have you discovered?'

"'This is too much (exclaimed I), shameless, audacious woman! darest thou hope still to blind me? but I will instantly cover thee with confusion.'

"I flew to her cabinet, it was locked, and I demanded the key; she gave it to me with the utmost composure!

"I soon found what I sought for; I drew the portrait from its case, it was a strong resemblance of Clerimont; I held it before her, she shrieked and fainted.

"It was well for us both, that she did, since I cannot answer to what extremes my passion might have transported me; but her insensibility disarmed my rage, in some degree, and hastily left the apartment.

"The marchioness's scream had brought up her woman, whom I met as I was rushing down stairs; I ordered Leonora, when her lady recovered, to

let me know, and in about half an hour she came to me.

"'The marchioness has now recovered her senses; my lord, (said he), but she is so extremely ill, that she begs you will not ask to see her.'

"Though I longed to upbraid her with her guilt, yet, I resolved to wait till she was in a condition to hear me, but the whole of that day she continued according to Leonora's account very ill, and the next morning she was delirious; though I had persuaded myself that I abhorred her, yet the shock that this intelligence gave me, proved that she had still too much power over my heart; I would fain have persuaded myself that she counterfeited, but the physicians, whose testimony I could not doubt, assured me that her life was in imminent danger.

"Never had I passed such a day of misery, at one moment, I reproached myself for what I had done; 'I ought

to have proceeded with more caution, (cried I), frail as she had been, I knew her sensibility, and if she dies I— I am her murderer.' These reflections, were almost immediately succeeded by others of a different nature.

"'She deserves her fate (said I), and I am but an instrument in the hands of Heaven to punish her perfidy.'

"In these, and similar thoughts I spent the day. The night was perfectly still and serene, not a cloud obscured the face of the Heavens; and hoping that the air would a little relieve the agitation of my spirits, I walked out, and wandered I knew not whither.

"I continued to stroll for some hours, till at last, overcome by fatigue, I bent my steps homeward; I had in my pocket the key of a private door in the garden, and through that I resolved to enter.

"I did so, and was proceeding to the house, when in passing a small temple, I thought I heard the sound of voices;

aused a moment, and was surprised
And that it was Don Carlos, and
nora in earnest discourse.
"I felt indignant, that he should
nk of continuing his intrigue with
s girl, when the following words
etted me to the spot where I
od.
"'Let me hear no more of this folly
ied he angrily), our plan has most
ppily succeeded, and would you
w mar all? beware Leonora, how
u dare betray me; by Heaven! the
oment that discovers to De Santenos
e innocence of his wife shall be your
t."
"You know that I dare not, that I
ll not disobey you (said Leonora in
supplicating accent), but could you
ly hear the incoherent ravings of
e unhappy marchioness, could you
e the state to which we have re-
ced her, even your heart would be
uched with pity.'
"I stopped to hear no more. I burst

into the temple, and would instantl have sacrificed the traitor Carlos to m vengeance, but he fled. I pursued, b could not overtake him, and I hastil returned to the temple, almost despai ing to find Leonora, as I supposed th she too had escaped; but I was mistake she had fainted, and still continued i sensible.

"I locked the door, and flew to t house for assistance; when I return with some of my domestics we fou her recovering, she threw herself at m feet, and burst into tears.

"'Oh! my lord (cried she), hav mercy upon me, I am indeed a guilt wretch, but spare my life, and I wil confess every thing!'

"I promised her a pardon, and sh proceeded to disclose to me a scene o iniquity that struck me at once wit horror and indignation. To be brief from the time that the marchioness had repulsed Carlos, his whole thoughts were bent upon revenge; by his artful wiles

he soon succeeded in seducing the unhappy Leonora, whom he intended to make a principal instrument in his designs. This girl, at his instigation, persuaded the marchioness that I was unfaithful to her, and hence arose her melancholy.

"The marchioness had two miniatures of me, but neither of them pleased her, and a portrait painter of eminence having arrived at Madrid, she expressed to me a wish to have a miniature from him; I replied, coldly, and she did not again mention it, but she privately had one drawn, which was, in fact, the portrait I had seen her weep over; this circumstance inspired Don Carlos with a project, which had nearly proved fatal to Maria and myself. He possessed both taste and skill in the art, and he drew from memory a good likeness of Lord Clerimont. On the night that I had, as I imagined, demonstration of Maria's infidelity, Leonora had given to her mistress a soporific mixture, and

no sooner had it taken effect than
changed the portraits. When I p
sented Clerimont's to the marchione
astonishment and terror deprived h
of her senses; but no sooner did she
cover than she sent to speak to m
but the artful Leonora delivered a co
trary message, and she, and her vile pa
mour, exulted in having, as th
thought, completely succeeded in th
diabolical scheme. When, howev
Leonora found her mistress's life w
in danger, her conscience, which h
so long slept, menaced her with t
punishment due to her crimes; harde
ed as she was, she could not reflect wit
out remorse, that if the marchion
died she was in fact her murderer; t
contrition which she expressed starth
De Padilla, and he appointed her
meet him in the garden, in the ho
of terrifying her into silence; but ete
nal justice, which never sleeps, led me
the spot at the moment that tho

wretches supposed themselves secure from all human observation.

"Scarcely could the sex of the offender protect her from my vengeance. When she had concluded her tale, and I saw how completely I had been her dupe, and that of the villain's, De Padilla, I flew instantly to the chamber of my wife; but she was insensible to my repentance; her delirium was now at its height; and oh! how did the unconscious sufferer tear my heart by expressions of the tenderest love for me: for ten days I never left her bed-side. At the end of that period it pleased heaven to restore her reason. Though I used the utmost caution in informing her that her innocence was cleared, yet her joy had nearly occasioned a relapse; Providence, however, spared her to my prayers, and I had at last the satisfaction of hearing her pronounced out of danger.

CHAP. V.

"You will believe that I made the str
est enquiry after De Padilla. In
did my gentle Maria beseech m
leave the wretch to the punishm
Heaven; my soul thirsted for veng
and I was determined, if possible
tain it; he secreted himself, h
so artfully, that I could not
his retreat, and I began to be
he had quitted Spain, till I m
accident to-night; he would h
ed me, but it was not poss
tacked him with fury, and h
The marquis ceased, an
said he deserved his fate,

and nothing to apprehend from doing himself justice. "My secret (replied De Santenos), is known only to you, and from your honour I doubt not of its being faithfully kept."

The count assured him secrecy, and he left the marquis to his repose, with a promise to see him the following day.

The next morning he repeated his visit, and was received with much friendship by De Santenos, who introduced him to the marchioness, Montalva gazed upon her with admiration, for never before had he beheld such loveliness; not even Valeria, beautiful as he had thought her, could be said to equal the marchioness De Santenos: grace, dignity, and beauty, were in her most happily blended; and even the cold and callous heart of Montalva, acknowledged the power of her charms.

The relations of Don Carlos De Padilla, made use of every effort to discover the murderer, but in vain, and the affair gradually died away. Montalva be-

came almost domesticated in the family of the marquis, who treated him with the most brotherly regard; nor was the lovely marchioness less attentive to her husband's friend. The count had intended to quit Spain for England, but the intreaties of the marquis and his lady prevailed upon him from time to time to defer his departure.

In the midst of the felicity which De Santenos enjoyed, Montalva perceived that he was frequently a prey to gloom and abstraction.

"How is this, my friend (said he, one day when they were alone), what is it that thus depresses thy spirits? who is then so blest as thou art? Love and fortune crown thee with their choicest favours, and yet there are times when thou seemest insensible of their bounty."

"My mind, Montalva, has received a shock which it will not easily recover (said De Santenos), injured friendship, and insulted honour urged me to seek the life of De Padilla; I did it fairly too,

but shall I own to thee, that since his death I have not tasted peace; a thousand times have I wished that I had taken the advice of my Maria, and left him to the punishment of his own conscience."

"Nay, this is childish, marquis (said the count), his life was too small an atonement for his perfidy, and most justly did he deserve to lose it."

"It is true he did so (replied De Santos), but my hand should not have inflicted the blow; the form of this unhappy man is for ever before me, and I shudder when I reflect that I hurried him into eternity with all his unrepented sins upon his head; vengeance should extend but to the grave, and how dreadful is the thought that I have, perhaps, caused my victim to expiate his crime by endless tortures. Oh, heavens! if such are my feelings, what must be those of the assassin."

The marquis was too much absorbed in his own thoughts, to heed the effect

which this speech produced upon Montalva, whose blanched cheek, and quivering lip, would have betrayed to an attentive observer that all was not right within; he turned from the marquis, and walked hastly to the window; in a few moments he recovered himself, and he took his leave.

"I must fly from Spain (said he, mentally, as he was returning home), but whether can I fly to avoid reflection? am I destined to be ever as now, pursued by the stings of conscience? I am surely the accursed of heaven, since I perpetually meet with fresh mementos of my guilt.

Within a few days the count quitted Madrid, spite of the entreaties of the marquis and marchioness De Santenos, who urged his stay with all the warmth of friendship, he resolved to visit England, and the marquis gave him a letter to Lord Clerimont, which Montalva accepted, though he did not mean to avail himself of it, and he sailed

for England, in the vain hope of regaining that peace which must ever be a stranger to the bosom of unrepented guilt.

They had not been long at sea when a violent storm arose, and in a few hours the destruction of the vessel seemed inevitable; all was tumult and confusion. In the field of battle, Montalva would have met death without shrinking, but he now regarded its approach with terror.

"All hopes in this world are over, my friends. (cried the captain, rushing into the cabin), and we must endeavour to make our peace with Heaven." The passengers knelt to supplicate its mercy, and the count also dropt upon his knees, but the wretched Montalva could not pray, the form of the murdered De Rosonia seemed to stand before him, and he could almost have thought that the voice of the count thundered in his ear, "the hour of vengeance is at last arrived."

"We have discovered the leak, and she may yet weather the storm" (was vociferated from above). "Blessed be that Providence who thus deigns to give us a chance of life (exclaimed one of the passengers), but let us try whether we cannot assist the sailors." He flew upon deck, and most of the other passengers followed his example. In a few moments all hands were called to the pump, and Montalva heard them say, "The leak increases." "We are lost," exclaimed he, and at the same moment an old sailor entered the cabin.

"Why, yes, we should be, I think, if we were all like you (cried the tar, with that bluntness which characterises the lower order of his countrymen), here is every one, old and young, hard at work, and so they ought to be, when life's at stake, but you are content to sit still and bemoan yourself, while other people work for you, but may-

p you think your life is of greater lue than any body's else."

Montalva did not reply, and the ilor left the cabin; the haughty tem- r of the count would have prompted im at any other moment to resent hat he would have termed the man's olence: but his spirit was at this oment so completely humbled, that scarcely felt it; he went upon deck; ere, all were busily employed. hamed to appear inactive, he took ern at the pump; in a short time e storm abated, and the captain (an d experienced seaman), assured the ssengers that their danger was over.

Nothing could exceed the joy which is intelligence caused, they embraced d congratulated each other with trans- rt; Montalva alone, did not partici- te in the general happiness, he could t lift his heart in humble gratitude to e Giver of all good; he dared not re- n thanks to that Almighty Power,

who had thus snatched him from an untimely death.

"Never before did I feel myself a coward (said the captain), but it is only last year (continued he, addressing one of the passengers), that I lost my son, and his widow and three helpless babes have, since that time, been wholly dependant upon me; for myself, it matters not whether I go to my last account now, or a few years hence; I have looked death in the face too often to fear it, and I trust in the Divine Goodness to pardon those frailties incident to our nature; but when I thought of leaving my poor Fanny, and her helpless little ones to that unpitying world, where I myself have met no mercy, I could have wept like a very woman. Oh! how rejoiced shall I be, to clasp my poor girl again in my arms, and to hear the little ones as they cling about me, lisp out their joy at my return."

This speech was a dagger to the unt, "All, all, save me, (thought he) ve some object, for whom they wish live; but I am a solitary wretch, wanderer on the earth; why then do continue to exist? What can I have suffer in another world, worse than now endure?" For a moment the ea of suicide crossed the mind of the retched Montalva, and with all the nconsisteney of guilt, he now regretd his escape from that death, which ot an hour before he would have iven worlds to avoid. He retired to he cabin, to meditate upon his dreadl purpose, but the agitation which his ind had undergone affected his frame, nd in a few hours he was delirious.

The captain paid him every attention at humanity could suggest, and by ie time they reached the British shore, e was out of danger; but weak as fancy. In this state he was removed a hotel, and the worthy captain, anxis as he was to embrace his daugh-

ter-in-law, and his grand-children, would not leave him for a few days, till he was less an invalid.

The heart of the count, though naturally bad, was not wholly inaccessible to the feelings of humanity; and he felt grateful for the disinterested kindness of the rough, but honest seaman; as soon as Montalva was able to go abroad, the captain hastened to embrace his family, who lived in retirement a few miles from the metropolis.

"If I thought that your lordship could put up with very humble accommodation (cried he to the count), I am sure that change of air would be of service to you, and you would find my daughter an excellent nurse."

This invitation Montalva did not hesitate to decline; a calm scene of domestic happiness, was not one in which he was likely to taste of peace; he expressed a wish to see Captain Sterling upon his return to London, and he forced upon the tar, a much larger sum

ion that he had agreed to pay for his passage. As soon as he was able, the count endeavoured to amuse himself with a survey of every thing curious in the splendid and busy metropolis of the first commercial city in the world; and had not his mind been diseased beyond the power of cure, he would have been pleased with the novelty of all that he saw; but the barbed arrow was doomed to wrankle for ever at his heart, and he found peace as unattainable in the midst of the gaieties of London, as in the solitude of D'Rosolio's castle.

The count had arrived in England a short time previous to the commencement of a general election, and as he was one day walking towards Covent Garden, he saw a crowd assembled; and struggling to get out of it, was a young woman, who was nearly fainting. "Pray, for Heaven's sake! let me pass" (said she), but the mob intent

on pressing forward to the hustings, paid no attention to her, and Montalva saw that in a few moments she would most probably fall, and be trampled to death; he made his way through the mob with some difficulty, and getting near the female, he desired her to hold one arm, at the same time he put his other round her waist, and conducted her in safety through the crowd.

When she could speak, which was not for some moments, she thanked him with a grace and propriety which, from the plainness of her appearance, he had not expected. The colour, which terror had robbed her of, began to return while she was speaking, and the roseate glow that overspread her countenance, when on looking up, she beheld the eyes of the count fixed upon her, gave to her soft features the charm of animation; the only one they wanted. She was in truth a perfect English beauty, delicate, regular features, soft

her eyes; and a profusion of the loveliest flaxen hair, rendered her an interesting object, even to Montalva.

"You are not yet perfectly recovered from your fright (said he), have you much farther to go?"

She replied in the negative, and he continued to walk by her side, till they reached a small neat house, at the door of which she knocked, and on it being opened, she bade him good morning.

Though a libertine, the mind of the count had long been too much harrassed by remorse to feel sensible of the charms of beauty: but he was pleased with the person of this girl, and as her circumstances were apparently humble, he thought that he should find no difficulty in obtaining her for a mistress, as he could not, from her extreme youth, suppose that she was married. Near the house which she entered was a fruiterer's shop, and he resolved to make enquiries there after

her, but all that he could learn, was, that she was unknown in the neighbourhood; that she seldom went out, and that she had no visitors.

From this information, the count was satisfied that she was at least poor, and unprotected; two circumstances, that would, he supposed, induce her to receive his proposals with pleasure; he waited however for some days, and he attentively observed her conduct, but she did not go out; she never appeared at her windows, and he was, from the perfect solitude, and the apparently blameless tenor of her life, inclined to believe her innocent.

No sentiment of compassion or remorse however, interfered to prevent his trying to render her otherwise; the money which he had in his power to bestow would, he thought, be a sufficient compensation for the loss of chastity. For years back, had this wretched man experienced the insufficiency of money to procure happiness; yet,

proposed to deprive a fellow being
the greatest earthly good, and to
her in return, that dross which
to himself as nothing.

But the proposals of Montalva,
ugh liberal, and even splendid, were
eted with disdain by Ellen Dudley;
answer was concise, but decisive.

"Neither my heart, nor my person,
saleable.

"E. Dudley."

This laconic billet, was the only an-
er she vouchsafed to send the count,
though he wrote repeatedly, yet his
ters were returned unopened, and he
ver could gain admittance to her pre-
nce; this unexpected disappointment
ued his pride, and what at first was
rely an inclination, became a pas-
n, which he was determined at any
k to gratify. The single line that
e had written him, was rather, he
ught, the language of insulted pride

than offended virtue, and he execrat the haughtiness to which he attribut his rebuff. "Yet who (thought h could suppose it possible, that a girl apparently gentle, so meek and unassu ing, should possess so much insolenc but I will humble her spirit proud it is."

While he was devising a plan to ca her off, he received a note from h desiring to see him, and he immedia ly obeyed her summons; he was she into a small apartment, and in a f moments she appeared.

She had evidently tried to collect h self, but the sight of the count seem to deprive her of her self-possessi and too much agitated to speak, motioned him to be seated.

The count began a compliment speech, but she interrupted him, have to request your patience, (cried she), what I have to say will s prise, perhaps offend you, but I wish be sincere with you, and to act with

disguise. In refusing the proposals which you made me—proposals which I will acknowledge were liberal in the extreme, I was not actuated by virtuous motives, for I am an unhappy being, who to the indulgence of a mad passion have sacrificed my honour." Her voice faltered, and for a few moments she was silent.

"Until lately, very lately, I knew not that I should be deserted; I knew not that the man to whom my whole soul was devoted, would from the cold considerations of worldly prudence, abandon me to poverty and shame; but he has done so, and I—"

"In my arms (cried the count interrupting her), thou shalt find a shelter from both; my rank and wealth are known to thee, and all they can bestow, thou shalt freely command."

"I thank your lordship (replied she), but can you be content with the possession of a woman whose heart is dead to love? a woman, who frankly avows to you, that distress alone could

induce her to give herself to your arms, and tells you that gratitude and fidelity, are all that you have to expect from her."

"Well, madam (cried the count), I will accept you on your own terms, and you shall have no cause to repent your confidence in my honour."

It was not without an effort that Montalva spoke thus, for his pride was stung to the quick, by what he internally termed the insolence of Ellen: and he formed the ungenerous resolution of gaining possession of her person, and then retaliating the contempt with which she treated him.

It was his wish to take for her elegant apartments, and to bestow upon her every luxury and enjoyment that wealth could purchase; but a life of retirement was more congenial to her disposition, and she declined mixing in the gay scenes which the count spoke of.

Her determination was not displeas-

; to Montalva, who soon made for
: a small, but elegant establishment,
l visited her daily. The novelty of
character interested him. The
ghtly graces of the French ladies,
l the voluptuous allurements of the
ians, he was no stranger to; but the
ture of gentleness and *hauteur*, of
sibility and firmness, which he
nd in Ellen Dudley, he had never
ore met with; always grave, simple,
l rational, the reserve and coldness
her manners would most probably
n have disgusted the count, but for
ircumstance that gave her a strong
d upon his heart: this was her being
gnant; often, and deeply had he
retted the child of Valeria; had she
d, he thought that he should at least
e one being whom the ties of con-
guinity would have attached to him;
frequently had he envied De Roso-
the possession of the little Isabel.
e intelligence of Ellen's pregnancy
e to his bosom a degree of pleasure

which it had long been a stranger to; he redoubled the tenderness and attention with which he had hitherto treated her, and she appeared more grateful for those attentions than she had yet been.

One day the count expressed a strong curiosity to know the particulars of her life.

"It does not contain any incidents worthy of your attention, my lord (said she), my days have been latterly marked with error, and its natural consequences misery and disappointment; I was plunged into distress while I was yet a stranger to guilt; and from a scrupulous attention to the opinion of the world, despair taught me to brave it; I looked around me, and I saw that with the major part of mankind appearances were all, and that rank and wealth were deemed a sufficient excuse for the greatest enormities; death had deprived me of the only being upon earth on whom I had a natural claim; I was poor and unprotected, and these I

hand were considered as sufficient reasons why I was to be treated with insult or neglect; my temper became soured, and my disposition changed: that flow of benevolence, which I had hitherto felt for all the human race, was converted into misanthropy. I learned to consider my fellow-creatures with suspicion and distrust, and to think that every appearance of kindness proceeded from interested motives; but my heart was not made for a state of apathy, and in exchanging it for a warmer sentiment, I entailed upon myself endless regrets; but I beg your pardon, my lord (continued she), I am giving you a detail of my sentiments, instead of my actions.

"My father, who was a naval officer, was as brave and worthy a man as ever lived; he married, early in life, a woman whose birth was much superior to his own, and whose fortune would have been large but for her preference of him. My mother was under the guardianship of

an uncle, and if she married without his consent she forfeited nearly the whole of her property. Both my father and herself were, however, too much attached to regard this circumstance in the light of a serious obstacle to their union.

"'My income, small as it is, my dear Charlotte (said my father), will afford us the decent comforts of life, and could you but be content with them, I should esteem myself the happiest of men in calling you mine.'

"'Was I desirous of more, I should be unworthy the possession of your invaluable heart (replied she), what indeed have we in this world to wish for beyond the joys of mutual affection, peace, and competence.' With such sentiments as these, you will suppose that the union of the lovers soon took place, and for some time their felicity was great indeed. A summons to my father to join his ship was the first interruption it met with; it was the first time that he ever felt reluctant to per-

form his duty, my mother was far gone in a state of pregnancy, and he dreaded the effect which his departure might produce upon her health and spirits; but the call of honour and of duty must be obeyed; and he tore himself away, after a thousand charges to her to be careful of her health for his sake, and for that of the dear expected one.

"My mother assumed the heorine, but it was a character that her native softness rendered her ill calculated to support; and her anxiety of mind brought on a premature labour. I was born two months before the usual time, and for some weeks after my birth, my mother entertained daily apprehensions of losing me: her fears were however vain, I began to thrive; and on my father's return at the end of a year, I was a stout, healthy child; and, as he declared, while he pressed me to his bosom, the perfect image of my mother. Some years rolled away, and the occasional absences of my father served to

give a keener relish to his domestic pleasures; they had no further increase of their family, and I was the little idol of both: but how transient is human felicity; the news of a battle, and of my father's health and safety, reached my mother at the same moment; he had taken a valuable prize, and the papers of the day were filled with accounts of his bravery, and of his generosity to the conquered enemy. Tears of gratitude to heaven for the preservation of her dear George's life, fell from the eyes of my mother, while her heart swelled with an honest pride at the well-earned applause so liberally bestowed upon him, and she anticipated with delight the transport of clasping him to her bosom in a few weeks, perhaps days. Alas! these hopes were destined never to be fulfilled; my father arrived safe in port, and immediately on his landing was seized with a violent fever, which carried him off in a few days.

"The news of this event had nearly proved fatal to my mother; and nothing

could, I believe, have enabled her to survive it, but her doating fondness for me. 'For thy sake, my beloved child, (said she), I must a little longer bear the load of life!' And to her it was indeed a load. I was at this period in my twelfth year, and I regretted my father as much as a girl at that age could do; but time soon reconciled me to my loss; not so my poor mother; her struggle with her feelings undermined her constitution, and though she lived for nearly four years after this event, she never could be said to enjoy a day's health.

"She devoted herself wholly to me; and as she could not bring herself to part with me, I had masters at home, and the care of my mind and morals was her only solace. I knew nothing of the world but from books and the conversation of my mother; for, after the death of my father, she never mixed with society. My natural disposition was open and unsuspecting, and I grew up in the belief, that to deserve friends

was the way to obtain them, and that I should everywhere meet with kindness and sincerity. Fatal, though innocent error, what misery do I not owe to thee!

"Before I had quite attained my sixteenth year, my mother died, and I was left under the guardianship of Mr. Wilmot, a man of whom she knew little, but his character was excellent, and he had been under the greatest obligations to my father. My little fortune of four thousand pounds, my mother left at my own disposal, as soon as I had attained my eighteenth year. Mr. Wilmot was a merchant, and appeared an amiable and benevolent man; he did not attempt to check the first exuberance of my grief; for he knew enough of human nature to know that, during the violence of sorrow, the voice of consolation is unheeded, or turned from with disgust; but he gradually weaned me from the contemplation of my irreparable loss, by pointing out to me the

happiness that was still within my reach. 'Friendship and benevolence offer their treasures to you, my dear ward (said he), in the duties of the one; as far as your limited fortune will afford you the means of fulfilling them, and the consolations of the other, you will soon recover peace.'

"He was right; I gradually regained my serenity, and my grief subsided into that sad but pleasing remembrance of my dear parent's virtues, that will, I trust, accompany me through life. I resided with Mr. Wilmot, whose sister kept his house. She was a plain good woman, and behaved to me with great civility; I neither expected nor wished for more, since our dispositions were too dissimilar for any degree of friendship to subsist between us.

"Frederic Wilmot, my guardian's only child, was soon considered by me as a brother; and I found that his father would not have been displeased to know that I was willing to exchange that

title for a tenderer one; but though my reason acknowledged that Frederic was amiable, my heart remained untouched, and I rejected his suit; but my doing so did not render us less friends, and I continued to be treated by Frederic as his sister, and by Mr. Wilmot as his daughter.

"My guardian was visited, and on terms of intimacy with many people whose rank and fortune were superior to his own; amongst these was the family of Sir Charles Cheslyn; it consisted of three daughters, all amiable girls, at least so they appeared; Lady Cheslyn had been dead some years, and Sir Charles was likely to remain a widower. The Misses Cheslyn paid me particular attention, and Harriet, the eldest, professed for me the warmest friendship. We soon became inseparable, and the house of Sir Charles was as much my home as that of my guardian. When I was turned of seventeen, Mr. Wilmot died suddenly, and as I

did not think it would be proper to remain in the house of his son, I removed, at their earnest invitation, to my friends the Chealyns. Frederic Wilmot was our frequent visitor. As his father had died without any settlement having taken place of his affairs, Frederic had offered to pay my fortune into my own hands, but I declined receiving it. One morning he came, and said that he wanted to speak to me alone.

"'My dear Ellen (cried he), I have an opportunity of employing a sum of money in a way that cannot fail to double it. I shall embark a few thousands in this scheme; what say you, will you speculate with me?'

"'You know (replied I), that the little I can call my own is in your hands, but I would not rashly venture it in the hope of gaining more; that sum will always be to me a competence, but should I lose it, beggary awaits me; I must therefore decline your offer, and I beg of you to be careful how

you proceed: you know your late father was no friend to speculation, and you know too the thousands whom it has ruined.'

" 'You may depend upon it that I will never be one of them (cried he), since I shall not venture deeply.' He soon took his leave, and I thought no more of our conversation; but, alas! I had soon reason to recollect it. He had obtained money from different people, under the pretence of laying it out to advantage, and he quitted England in a few months, taking with him every shilling that he had thus iniquitously raised.

" This intelligence was to me like a thunder-clap; scarcely could I believe it possible that a man, of whose probity I had always thought so highly, should be so dreadfully depraved. If in a moment of folly he had rashly speculated, and lost, dreadful as the consequence would have been to me, I could have forgiven him; but this settled plan to

e upon the confidence of the un-
proved him to possess the black-
ıd the most insensible of hearts.
was some time before I was sen-
f the extent of my misfortune. I
indeed that I had lost my for-
but I knew not, that with it I
so lost my friends. The behavi-
the Misses Cheslyn grew gradu-
older; even Harriet, whom I
with the affection of a sister, and
regard I had every reason to be-
vas reciprocal, treated me with a
of haughty civility, that at once
ied my pride and deeply wounded
eart.

cannot describe to your lordship
ıriety of trivial slights which for
ıs I was forced to endure in si-
since I had no friends to whom
ıld fly for kinder treatment. I
ow looked upon, by all the visitors
e family, as the humble compa-
of the Misses Cheslyn, and I was
d literally their companion, for

they never suffered me to be a moment out of their presence. The behaviour of their father was, however, still unchanged; and his friendship, and the politeness with which he treated me, softened in some degree the misery of my situation.

CHAP. VI.

"From being of an open and cheerful temper, I gradually became reserved and silent. One day that Miss Chesyn was rallying me on the change, with more flippancy than wit or good manners, my spirits were so oppressed by a variety of painful recollections, that I hastily quitted the room, and retired to the garden to indulge those tears that I could not suppress.

"I entered a small temple, where I sometimes sat with my work, and supposing myself wholly unobserved, I gave a loose to the grief and indigna-

tion that swelled my heart almost to bursting.

"Absorbed in tears, I did not perceive that any one had entered, till I was roused by the voice of Sir Charles.

"'Dearest Miss Dudley (said he), let me beseech you not to suffer the levity of a thoughtless girl thus to affect your spirits.'

"I hastily dried my eyes, and tried to speak, but I could not articulate, and he continued.

"'I have long seen, with regret, that your situation in my family is not a happy one; my daughters are not as sensible as I could wish of your merits; and even if they were, you are not formed for a life of dependance; how happy should I be in inducing you to exchange it for one of freedom and affluence.'

"I gazed at him in silence; for tho' his words were equivocal, I was unwilling to understand them in the light of an insult, or to suppose that a man,

who had repeatedly declared, that he considered me as his daughter, would wish to render me infamous; but he, conceiving, I suppose, that my silence was intended to signify my acquiescence with his wishes, seized my hand, which he pressed to his lips, and thanked me for my condescension in the warmest terms; my reply undeceived him, but it stung his pride, and he was mean enough to reproach me with the obligations I was under to him.

"However numerous they may be, sir (cried I), this behaviour is sufficient to cancel them all; you shall not, however, add to favours which at this moment are sufficiently oppressive to my feelings; I will quit your house as speedily as possible."

"I left him when I had ceased speaking, and returned to the house; I retired to my own apartment to consider how I should dispose of myself. Oh! how wretched is the situation of that being, who looks round the universe

and sees no soul on whom she has the claim of consanguinity, or the still dearer one of friendship! no heart that beats for her distresses, or pants to relieve them. This forlorn situation was mine; and with a heart almost broken did I apostrophize the spirit of my dear mother, and pray to Heaven that I might speedily join her in those blessed mansions, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

"I remained in my own room the rest of the day, and I thought of, and rejected a variety of plans. The next morning I went as usual to preside at the breakfast table, and happening to cast my eyes upon a morning paper, I saw an advertisement from a lady of distinction, who wanted a companion. Dependence upon any one must, I thought, be less irksome than my present situation; and indeed, after what had passed, my pride forbade me to remain in the Cheslyn family. I waited upon Lady Diana Douglas, but at the

first glance of her ladyship my heart sunk; her haughty and forbidding countenance, her austere and formal manners, seemed to say that any degree of comfort was incompatible with dependence upon her. I had, however, the good, or rather the ill fortune to please her, and I agreed to remove to her house the following week.

"When the Misses Cheslyn found that I intended to leave them, they were equally mortified and surprised; they made, however, no efforts to prevent my departure, and the following week saw me the inmate of Lady Diana Douglas.

"I soon found that I had engaged myself in a mode of life of all others the most repugnant to my feelings; I was the slave of a haughty and capricious woman, who treated me indeed with the ceremonious politeness which she thought due to me as a gentlewoman, but, at the same time, with a formality

and austerity, that no being who possessed more animation than an automaton could patiently submit to. She was of a very retired and domestic turn, and rarely partook of any public amusements; but when she did, I always accompanied her. The restraint under which I lived preyed upon my health, and I was sinking fast into a state of despondency, when an incident occurred that awakened me to feelings equally new and delightful.

"Her ladyship had a favourite nephew, whom I had heard her speak of as a very promising young man; her sentiments and mine, however, were too dissimilar for me to pay any attention to the encomiums she lavished upon him; but when I saw him, I was compelled to own that they were just. Graceful, elegant, and insinuating, he concealed the most brilliant talents under an unassuming suavity of manners, that rendered him at once respected and beloved.

"He dined with us on the day that I first saw him; and Lady Diana, who was in unusual spirits, behaved to him with more kindness than I thought she had been capable of shewing: he once or twice called a frown into her countenance by being rather too attentive to me; but when he saw that his civilities drew upon me some unpleasant looks from his aunt, he ceased to regard me, and attended wholly to her.

"For some months he passed several hours daily at her ladyship's house; and every interview added to the interest with which he had inspired me. When I listened to those brilliant sallies of wit that flowed from his lips; when I contemplated the benevolence that glowed in his expressive countenance, I regarded him as almost a superior being, and a passion the most fatal to my repose stole into my bosom under the guise of esteem and admiration.

"Mr. Pembroke depended wholly on his uncle, Lord Robert Douglas, who

had promised to make him his heir, and who behaved to him in every respect but one with the kindness of a father; that one was a positive stipulation on the part of Lord Robert, that Percival should never marry without his consent, which he declared he would never give to his uniting himself to any woman who was not of noble blood; money was not so much his lordship's object, but birth was indispensible; and Pembroke saw, that if he ever married, he would probably be obliged to give his hand rather in obedience to the dictates of ambition than affection.

"He took every opportunity, in the absence of Lady Diana, to endeavour to give me that consequence with myself which she sedulously laboured to deprive me of; and a succession of those little delicate attentions which, as one of our favourite authors expresses it, "are neither so pointed as to alarm, nor so vague as to be misunderstood," began by slow degrees to open my eyes as

the nature of his sentiments for me. ow did my heart throb with transt when I first ventured to think that loved me; but the impossibility of r union soon chaced the delightful ion which, for a few moments, I had dulged; and I awoke to sober reflecns and to real misery.

Lady Diana had for some time been naced with an attack of the gout, d it had rendered her unusually peev- she began to lay aside the cereonious politeness with which she had first treated me, and at times she beaved with a degree of capricious rudeess that hurt me inconceivably. Mr. embroke saw and sympathized in my fferings; and one day that he had itnessed her treating me with more an usual severity, he abruptly left e room. I saw by the change in his untenance, and the glance of disdain hich he cast at her ladyship, how elingly sensible he was of her insolent ranny.

"In the evening I received from him a letter, which contained an avowal of his passion in the most delicate and respectful terms; he lamented the reasons that prevented his offering me his hand immediately, but would I condescend (he said) to promise him mine, his uncle was far advanced in life, and it was probable that a short time would enable him to make me his in the face of the world; until then I would, he hoped (if I accepted his proposals), allow him the happiness of placing me far above the tyranny of Lady Diana, which must, he knew, be utterly insupportable to my spirit.

"The momentary transport which this letter gave me, was perhaps the greatest I have ever experienced; it gratified equally my love and my pride, though the latter induced me positively to refuse placing myself under any pecuniary obligations to him. I did not, however, hesitate to acknowledge my predilection for him; but while I promised

him my hand at the death of his uncle, I steadily refused to leave the protection of his aunt. I was now, I thought, possessed of a talisman, that would enable me to bear with patience her ill humour, and I could not think of a state of dependance upon Pembroke, dear as my heart whispered he was to me.

"In his answer Mr. Pembroke thanked me with transport for my acquiescence with the first part of his wish, but he remonstrated with warmth against my continuance with Lady Diana. I was, however, firm in my determination; most happy would it have been for me if I could have kept it; but this her ladyship's temper rendered impossible; and, spite of my reluctance to leave her house, I was compelled to seek another asylum.

"Percival now insisted so warmly upon the right he had, as my affianced husband, to provide for me, that I consented to remove to a small retired ha-

bitation in the environs of London, which he had fitted up for me in a style of simple elegance. I was indeed the more readily induced to agree to this plan, because Lord Robert, who had been for some time in a declining state of health, grew daily worse, and his recovery was considered impossible.

Mr. Pembroke now visited me when ever he could leave his uncle; and for a short period I tasted the purest happiness. At first, indeed, I felt the awkwardness of my situation, but the uniform respect and tenderness with which he treated me, soon banished every uneasy sensation, and left no room in my heart for aught but love and confidence; that heart which, previous to my knowledge of Percival, had appeared shut to every human being, now expanded with hope and delight; my mind recovered its tone, and cheerfulness again sparkled in my eyes, and decked my countenance with smiles.

"Your lordship will excuse me if I

ıss over the circumstances of my un-
ing; suffice it to say, that I had no
use to reproach Percival; there was
ıt, I firmly believe, the least intention
ı his part of seduction. One un-
ıarded moment plunged us both into
ilt, and robbed me of peace for ever.

" Pembroke vehemently insisted
ıon marrying me immediately, but I as
ısitively refused. I well knew that,
ıould our marriage be discovered, it
ıust prove his utter ruin; and I had
ıo high an opinion of his honour, to
ıubt his making me his wife the mo-
ent he could do so with safety.

" By arguments that were more spe-
ous than solid, he endeavoured to
oncile me to the past, and most so-
mnly did he invoke the Almighty to
itness his intention to make me every
paration in his power. I cannot
ithout shuddering recollect the mo-
ent in which he imprecated Heaven's
ngeance on his head, if ever he de-
rted me. Unhappy man! may that

power, whose sacred name he so dreadfully prophaned, forgive you as sincerely as I do.

"Accident discovered to Lord Robert that Pembroke visited me; he wrote to acquaint me with this circumstance, and to say, that for some few days he feared he could not see me; but he besought me to keep up my spirits, and to rely upon him; he also begged that I would write to him immediately.

"This intelligence terrified me. I dreaded that Lord Robert might insist upon his nephew's giving me up, and, in case of his refusal, might proceed to the greatest extremities. I determined to leave my house directly, and as I thought that I should be more likely to remain concealed in an obscure lodging in London, I took those in which you first saw me, and immediately apprised Pembroke of what I had done, and my reasons for it. When I came here, I found I had a new cause of uneasiness. Pembroke had sent me bank bills to a

considerable amount, and I thought that I had placed the pocket-book that contained them amongst my clothes; but when I unpacked them, I found I had not done so. I went immediately to the house I had just quitted, but my search was vain; the money was irrecoverably gone.

"A few guineas was all that I possessed; but the vexation that this circumstance gave me, soon gave place to a far deeper grief. Day after day passed, and I heard nothing of Mr. Pembroke. I wrote, but in vain; and I was nearly distracted from an idea, that illness might probably occasion his absence. Every rap at the door, every coach that I heard stop, caused my heart to throb with a painful violence known only to the victims of suspense; and when nearly a month had passed away, I thought I should have lost my reason.

"One of the candidates for the borough

of ——— was related to Lord Robert Douglas, and was I knew on terms of the strictest friendship with Pembroke. I thought it probable that, in compliment to his friend Percival, he might be on the hustings, and I dressed myself as plainly as I could the morning I first saw you, and ventured to Covent-Garden, in the hope of seeing him. To your lordship's humanity I probably owe my life; but bitterly did I regret your having preserved it, when I saw by the morning paper, on my return home, that Lord Robert and Pembroke had that day quitted England for Spain. Scarcely could I believe my senses, that Pembroke could thus abandon me; but I was soon convinced that it was the case. I caused enquiry to be made, and found that the paragraph was indeed true. Your lordship knows the rest."

Ellen ceased, and the count thanked her. Though her narrative had severely

mortified him, he did not suffer his chagrin to be visible to her; but the manner in which she had spoken of Pembroke convinced him, that her lover's hold on her heart was as strong as it had ever been, and but for the circumstance of her pregnancy, he would, in all probability, have broken off the connexion; but this incident gave her a consequence with him, that she would not otherwise have had.

A play was amongst the few amusements of which Ellen was fond, and one morning she expressed a wish to see Hamlet, which was to be performed that evening. Montalva knew nothing of the piece, but he offered to accompany her, and they accordingly went. Ellen, whose whole attention was given to the performance, did not perceive the effect it had upon the count, whose conscience was sensibly touched. The remorse that had so long tormented him had slumbered for a little, but the impressive language of our divine bard,

aided by the magic of Kemble's acting, brought his crime fresh to his memory, and he could almost have fancied he beheld the dying D'Rosonio; he sat with his eyes rivetted to the stage; but when Hamlet repeated the speech in which are these lines:

——————I have heard,
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions:

He could bear it no longer, but starting up, complained of illness, and Ellen, who was alarmed at the alteration visible in his countenance, hurried home with him immediately.

During their drive, Montalva was silent; but he frequently sighed deeply, and when Ellen, in the gentlest accents, inquired whether he felt himself better, he replied in the negative. Though he was in general temperate, he drank

ely of Madeira as soon as they reached me, in the hope that the potency of e wine would banish reflection, and ble him to obtain some rest; but he s disappointed; for he never closed s eyes, and the morning found him refreshed, and a prey to fever.

For some days his behaviour was so omy and strange, that Ellen won- red what had affected him, and as e knew that he spent some of his ne at a gaming-house, she feared that had probably injured his fortune by ay; but in truth, though he often nged there, he had never, till after e night on which his conscience was dreadfully awakened, played but for all sums; from that time his mind s in so perturbed a state, that he ped to alleviate the torments he suf- ed by plunging into the vortex of ep play.

This plan, in some degree, succeed-

The Neapolitans are fond of gam-

ing, and Montalva had formerly be
much addicted to it. His success v
wonderful; night after night he r
from table a winner, and in a ve
short time he had realised a conside
ble sum.

CHAP. VII.

One night two gentlemen entered, and placed themselves near the count.

"I think it will be madness (said one to the other), for though the sum in question is too small to be of actual service, yet in what a predicament will the loss of it place you."

"It is now no time to deliberate (replied the other); it is wholly insufficient, and the loss of it cannot make me more wretched than I am; but should I succeed, what happiness awaits me!"

This conversation passed in a low

betrayed the greatest agitation, and heavy sighs burst from his bosom. On a sudden he threw himself on his knees, and appeared to pray with uncommon fervency; he then rose, and taking a pistol from his pocket, he exclaimed aloud, "Oh! may Heaven forgive me." He grasped the pistol with an unsteady hand, and at that moment Montalva rushed forward, and seized his arm.

"Rash man! (cried the count) what would you do?"

Astonishment rendered the young man motionless for a few seconds; but he speedily recovered himself. "You have but delayed, not prevented my purpose (cried he). I must die, for never will I face the open infamy that awaits me if I live."

The moon shone uncommonly bright, and the agitation, the deep distress, that was visible in the young man's countenance, created a sentiment of pity in the heart of Montalva; it was the first

time he had ever felt interested for a fellow being; for to the feelings of pity and benevolence he had hitherto been a stranger.

"Tell me (cried he), is it the loss you have this night sustained, that forces you to this dreadful determination?"

"It is (replied the young man); the small sum I had in my possession was risked in the hope of winning enough to extricate me from the difficulties into which credulity and false friendship have plunged me. I had nearly gained the sum I wanted when you became my opponent; your good fortune prevailed, and I saw myself stripped of all."

"Well (cried the count), taking out his pocket-book, this loss shall not drive you to despair; I will return your money, and if the additional sum is not a very large one, you shall have it too."

The sudden transition from misery to happiness was more than the stranger could bear; he staggered, turned

pale, and but for the support of Montalva's arm, would have fallen to the ground; when he could speak, he expressed his gratitude with an incoherent fervour, that proved his sincerity; he declined, however, taking the money till he had explained the particulars of his situation, and as the count, when he was out late, usually slept at a hotel, he asked the young man to accompany him, and they walked to the Hummums.

Montalva made the stranger recruit his spirits with some Madeira, before he would suffer him to relate the following tale.

"My name is Henry Villars, and my father was once looked on as one of the first merchants in London, and no man was ever better calculated to support with credit the character of a British merchant; open, benevolent, and sincere, of known probity, and acknowledged skill in business, his character was respected by all ranks, and his

redit was unbounded. By one of those icissitudes, to which commercial men re liable, he saw himself stript of ealth; but friends and credit he ought yet remained; he was mis-aken, he had hitherto seen the world nly on one side, and he suspected not hat it had another; that there were ien, malignant enough to exult in his lownfal and that even those whom e had saved from beggary, could, with-at the smallest uneasiness, behold him educed to it. He applied to a man to hom he had been a most liberal bene-ctor, to lend him five thousand ounds, he thought not of soliciting his loan as a favour, he asked it as an ct of friendship, which he supposed Mr. Clementson would be happy in aving the power to show; I have fre-uently heard him mention the manner n which it was refused.

" 'I am really very sorry, Mr. Villars, Mr. was an appellation rarely used etween the friends), that it is not in

my power at present to serve you, I assure you there is no one whom I would so willingly oblige, but you can't be at a loss for so small a sum, you have many friends who will doubtless be happy to come forward on this occasion.'

"My father disdained to reply to this speech, which nevertheless cut him to the heart; there was not one of his friends on whom he had so firm a reliance, as the man whom he had just proved to be false and hollow; necessity, however, urged him to try others, but, alas! he met with ingratitude and disappointment everywhere.

"He determined to call his creditors together, to give up the remnant of his all amongst them, and then to seek a subsistence at a distance from London. The morning before the meeting of the creditors, he was told that Mr. Thornton wanted to see him; he would gladly have dispensed with this gentleman's visit; Mr. Thornton was a merchant,

he was a man just in his dealings, but parsimonious in the extreme.

"'He comes (thought my father), to exult in my misfortunes, but he shall at least see that I can bear them like a man;' and he ordered the servant to admit him.

"'Good morning to you, Mr. Villars, (said the old man, entering with an air of unusual respect, for his manners were blunt, and unpolished.) I am sorry to find that you have met with those misfortunes to which we are all liable, and I came to offer you my services.'

"My father thanked him with no small degree of surprise, but said he had no occasion to trouble him; Mr. Thornton, however, would not take this answer.

"'Look'ee, Mr. Villars (cried he), I *can* assist you without injury to myself, and I am determined that I *will* do it, so no compliments, but let us proceed like men of business.'

" ' How happens it (said my father), that you, with whom I never was on terms of friendship, or even intimacy, should thus generously step forward at a time when I find myself deserted by all who ought to serve me.'

" Mr. Thornton pressed his hand, ' you are an honest man, sinking under the pressure of unmerited calamity, and that is enough for me' (cried he).

" The generosity of this eccentric, but worthy man, was the means of enabling my father to settle his affairs; he paid his creditors twenty shillings in the pound, and in a short time saw himself clear with his friend Thornton, and in possession of a sum that would be a moderate independence for the rest of his days. ' I will not tempt my fortune farther (said he), and he retired from business. He was rather advanced in life, and had no thoughts of marrying, but the person and disposition of my mother, induced him

to enter a state, in which he experienced the greatest happiness.

"I was their only child, and at a very early age I showed a strong disposition to a life of commerce; in compliance with my earnest wishes, I was placed with Mr. Denton, a gentleman of eminence in the line, and with him I still am.

"Mr. Denton has the strongest confidence in me, and until a few days since, it was not ill placed, but in an unfortunate moment, I was prevailed upon to lend to a gentleman whom I had known from infancy, a large sum that I had in my hands of Mr. Denton's, he solemnly promised to return it within a few hours, and as I knew that it would essentially serve him, I thought not of the imprudence of which I was guilty. Oh, sir! what were my feelings, when I learned the next morning, that the villain had absconded; ruin and infamy stared me in the face, and what was worse than all, I should bring

disgrace upon the grey hairs of my beloved father. In a moment of despair, I formed the desperate resolution of trying my fortune at the gaming table, and though the hope of winning such a sum appeared almost chimerical, yet, I had nearly realized it, when my reverse of fortune, tempted me to the rash act which you prevented."

Montalva presented him with the money, and added to it the sum he wanted, which was not a large one; he interrupted Villars's acknowledgments, by expressing a wish to take some rest, and giving Heary his address, they retired to separate apartments.

It was the first time in Montalva's whole life that he had ever done what might be termed a disinterested good action, and oppressed as his conscience was with a load of guilt, he enjoyed for some moments the pleasure of having relieved a fellow creature from despair; but the worm that never dies, soon dissipated the pleasing reflections that

be indulged, and he relapsed into those [illegible]ldly horrors that rendered existence [illegible]esome to him.

The time of Ellen's *accouchement* approached, and Montalva saw with concern that she suffered a great deal, and apparently more in her mind than in her health; the physician who attended her, was of opinion that it would be wrong for her to suckle her child, and Montalva insisted so strenuously upon her giving it to the care of a nurse, that she reluctantly agreed; but her acquiescence with his wishes appeared to render her very unhappy, and for some days she suffered under the most dreadful depression of spirits.

"My dear Ellen (cried the count to her one evening), you will injure yourself, and the infant, by the indulgence of this melancholy; let me beg of you to lay it aside, what cause can you have for sorrow?"

"My situation, my lord (replied she), makes me serious. Heaven only

knows how I shall bear the approaching trial; but whatever may happen to me, may I hope that you will be indeed a father to——", she stopped, for she could not proceed, so excessively was she agitated.

"What part of my conduct (cried the count, sternly), makes you think me such a monster of inhumanity, as to behave unkindly to my own offspring?" He was proceeding, when Ellen burst into tears.

"Pardon me, my lord (said she), I meant not to offend you, but this weakness that hangs upon my spirits, renders me almost childish; and though I have not a doubt of your kindness to the babe, should it survive, yet, I would wish to be indulged with a solemn promise from your own lips, that whatever happens to me, you will protect and provide for it."

"Doubt it not (replied the count), may Heaven desert me, when I desert, or neglect the infant." A thought of

Valeria at this moment crossed his mind, and forced a sigh from his bosom. This promise seemed to tranquillize the spirits of Ellen, and she became more cheerful; her health amended with her spirits, but in going down stairs one day, when she was in the seventh month of her pregnancy, her foot slipped, and she was prematurely delivered of a fine boy. The infant, notwithstanding the circumstance of its birth, throve amazingly; and the mother, who recovered very fast, was well enough to suckle it herself: a task she fulfilled with delight. The pleasure that Montalva would have taken in seeing her execute the office of a nurse, was poisoned by more than one bitter retrospect. Often did the recollection of Valeria's tears, and distraction when he tore her infant from her arms, give a pang to his heart, while he witnessed the fond caresses which Ellen bestowed upon the little Stephano; and frequently while he gazed with delight upon the child, who was

indeed a lovely boy, the remembrance of the unhappy D'Rosonio, and the innocent wronged Isabel, dashed the cup of happiness with gall, and made him in bitterness of heart curse the fatal action that had poisoned his life.

His feelings were one night wound to agony by a conversation that took place in a coffee-house, where he sometimes went. A few weeks before, two men of rank and fortune had fought a duel, one had fallen, and as it was surmised not fairly; his antagonist had fled, but tormented by the reproaches of his conscience, he had returned and surrendered himself to justice: a gentleman who was an intimate friend of the deceased, was relating the particulars of the duel, as the count entered.

"Poor Sydenham (cried he); his noble nature was above suspicion, he thought not of the villainous hands into which he had fallen, and he was utterly unconscious of the long cherished pique which Wilberforce harboured against

him; the dispute which was on a political subject, was of so trivial a nature that Sydenham would have thought no more about it; but to the villain Wilberforce, it presented an opportunity to execute his vile design; he sent for Sydenham, and desired satisfaction; the other was willing to accommodate the matter, but this, Wilberforce would not hear of, and Sydenham consented to meet him the next day.

"'It is now too late (said Wilberforce), to trouble any of my friends, nor do I think a second necessary; you, Mr. Sydenham, will do as you please.'

"'If you do not wish for a second, neither do I (replied Sydenham): this was all Wilberforce wanted. They met early the next morning; and before Sydenham was prepared to receive his antagonist's fire, a ball from Wilberforce's pistol, entered his heart; he fell, and expired without a groan."

"The villain had now gained his long sought revenge; and he resolved on in-

stant flight. No soul had witnessed the death of Sydenham, and he thought that there was no possibility of the manner of it ever being discovered; a affair of honour, as it is falsely termed though it may exile a man from his native country, does not stamp him with the guilt of murder, and happy in the secrecy with which he had executed his diabolical purpose, he thought little of being compelled to quit England.

"But he speedily found that the completion of his crime was but the beginning of horrors that were to terminate only with his existence; for he acknowledges, that from the moment Sydenham fell, he has never known peace. He reached the place of his destination in safety, but the horrors of his mind were inconceivable; the murdered Sydenham was for ever before him, and the agonies he endured, had almost drove him to suicide, when the idea of giving himself up to justice

occurred to him, and he eagerly sought an ignominious death, as a refuge from the torments of conscience."

"Unhappy man (cried a gentleman present), let us hope that his punishment will be only in this world, he is indeed a striking proof of the power of conscience; nor can we wonder at it, when we consider the heinousness of his crime; since, depraved as human nature is, there are, I hope, very, very few, whom any temptation could induce to be guilty of cool deliberate murder: what think you, sir?" (continued he, turning to Montalva).

It was with difficulty the count could reply, for the question shook his every nerve, and spite of his efforts to compose and collect himself, his agitation was visible; it passed, however, for illness, and on that pretence he left the room as soon as he could. "What, (cried he, mentally, when he was alone), am I never again to taste of peace? Is every object to remind me of my

crime? by what fatality is it that thi accursed deed is for ever before me? oh would to Heaven that it was possibl to recal the past."

The endearing attentions of Ellen, and the smiles of his infant, were for some time lost upon Montalva; Henry Villars had called upon him, but the transient feeling of pity which that young man had excited, was over, and the count did not ask him to repeat his visit.

The birth of her child had effected a material change in the temper of Ellen; there were indeed times when she sunk into a fit of melancholy musing, but in general, she was more cheerful than the count had ever seen her, and the infant was to her a perpetual source of delight.

"I cannot conceive (said she one day to Montalva), how any human being can neglect an infant to whom they have given life; when I hang over the cradle of my child, and see

is eyes the moment they are opened ixed upon me, when he smiles and olds out his little arms, as if he already egan to notice, and to love me, how appy do I feel, I am convinced that he loss of life, would be a thousand mes preferable to the loss of my tephano, and that I should sooner rgive an attempt to deprive me of it, an to deprive me of him."

"What occasion is there for this eclaration? (cried Montalva, sternly), ou are not about to be deprived of im."

"No; Heaven be praised (replied e), I have nothing of that sort to ead, but these reflections came into y head I believe from reading a pretty d affecting French tale, in which the straction, and subsequent death of a other deprived of her infant, is de- ribed in the liveliest colours."

Montalva half-uttered, half-sup- essed the execration that was upon e point of bursting from his lips, and

hastily left the room; that moment had indeed amply avenged the wrongs of the unfortunate Valeria, conscience presented her to him as she was when he first beheld her; her soft cheek, glowing with the rich tints of health, her mild blue eyes, now sparkling with animation, now shooting through their long and silken lashes, glances, that spoke a heart the seat of innocence and peace. The voice of his internal monitor reversed the picture, and he saw her pale, emaciated, and a prey to melancholy; her eye robbed of its lustre, her cheek of its bloom, and her form of all those soft and attractive graces that had once rendered her the delight of every eye, and the wish of every heart: imagination carried the picture farther, and he shuddered as he beheld his victim on the bed of death; her meek and uncomplaining spirit, awaiting with patience the moment that was to release her from her sufferings, and anxious only for the

fate of her child; "and this (exclaimed he, frantically), this was my work! Oh, Valeria! wronged, lost, innocent, could thy meek spirit look down from Heaven, thou wouldst pity even the wretch that destroyed thee."

The emotion that Montalva betrayed, filled Ellen with surprise, but wholly ignorant of the former events of his life, she had no suspicion of its real cause; but imputed it to some embarrassment of his affairs, of which he did not chuse to make her the confidant.

Time, though it could not stiffle the remorse of Montalva, yet, enabled him in some degree to overcome the violent motions which circumstances had led him to give way to. Nearly three years had passed from the birth of his son, and every day rendered him more doatingly fond of the child; he had frequently expressed a wish to return to Naples, and take Ellen and Stephano with him, but Miss Dudley had always appeared so averse to this

measure that he never pressed it; his life during these years had been marked with no particular incident; he formed no connexions, and mixed with no other society than such as coffee-houses or taverns afforded him; he spent the most part of his time with Ellen and his child; to the former indeed he was attached solely by his regard for the latter; the inclination he had at first felt for her person was long since over; and of real and sincere love, the heart of Montalva was utterly incapable. Ellen Dudley, notwithstanding her fall from virtue, was formed for something better than to be the mere amusement of any man's idle hours; but her talents, her virtues, and her graces were regarded by Montalva with indifference; he was indeed incapable of appreciating them as they deserved.

The count saw a small villa in a romantic situation, a few miles from the capital, which pleased him, and as it was advertised to be sold, he purchased

it; he went there for a few days to give orders about some repairs, and Ellen and her son remained in London. On Montalva's return to town, he went immediately to her house. What was his astonishment to find it shut up, and to learn in the neighbourhood that she had left it some days back. "Where was she gone?" he impatiently asked the person who informed him of her departure, but the woman could not tell him. Miss (or as she was called Mrs.) Dudley had discharged her servants, and departed with her son in a post-chaise, but what road they took no one could tell. Montalva drove immediately to the hotel that he frequented when in London, in the hope of finding there some explanation of this strange step; it was indeed explained by the following packet, which awaited his arrival.

CHAP. VIII.

"By the time you receive this, my lord, I shall be many miles distant from London, nor shall we, I hope, ever meet again.

"I have been guilty of a cruel and infamous deception, for which I am at length punished, and for which my conscience has a thousand times reproached me; a deception which you can never pardon, but which I am compelled to reveal to you. In a short time after I had reason to suppose myself deserted, I feared that I was with child. Oh! what words can paint the horrors of my mind. Destitute as I was, I

ight, by some honest means, have ined a subsistence; but if my fears ere true, how was I to provide for my fant? how was I to obtain a sufficient m even to defray the expences of a ertain time? for a moment the idea f suicide presented itself. It will be ercy, thought I, to the unborn wretch, take it from a world where I myself ave met with none! Yet when I re-ected upon the double crime I was bout to commit, I shrunk with hor-r from my dreadful purpose. You d made me the most liberal proposals, hich I had, as you know, rejected; r however distressed, however forlorn, night be, I was far above being bribed to the prostitution of my person; that s, as I conceived, the lowest state of gradation to which any human being uld fall, and it was one that I was termined never to submit to. In the st moments of despair, I chanced meet with your letter, which I d thrown carelessly into a drawer;

those proposals which I had thought so little of, when they were made, now struck me as affording a means of providing for the infant; yet I call Heaven to witness, that at that time I had no thought of imposing it upon you as yours. I had indeed no settled plan; but I was destitute of every means to support myself or the fruit of my indiscretion, and I hastily resolved to accept your lordship's offer.

"When I had done so, I hoped that you would perform your promise of rendering me independant; but you seemed to have forgotten it; and tho' you were liberal to excess, I knew not how long your liberality would continue. A hundred times the acknowledgment of my situation was upon my lips, and as often did the coldness, I may say, sternness of your manners repress it. In a short time I saw, or fancied I saw, that you were becoming indifferent to me; want and desertion again stared me in the face, and inspired the

lea of the deception which I so suc-
ssfully practised; I do not ask your
rgiveness, my lord, for I feel that I
eserve it not.

"The pleasure that you expressed
hen you learned my situation; the
:tentions that you paid me, and your
oating fondness for my boy, whom,
t your desire, I named after yourself,
ere bitter stings to my heart; but the
lie was cast, and to confess the truth
ould now be attended only with ruin
o myself. I endeavoured to make my
nind easy, by the reflection that I heard
ou say, you had no near relations to
nherit your fortune, and that a decep-
ion which was so materially serviceable
o me and my babe, was not an actual
njury to any one else. This sophistry
ad not, however, the effect of quiet-
ng my mind; and I can truly say, that
never saw you caress the child with-
out uneasiness.

"But deception, sooner or latter,
meets with that punishment which is its

just reward. You have often noticed Stephano's extreme likeness to me. One day that the servant had the child in the Park, a gentleman seemed struck with his beauty, and enquired the name of his parents. 'He is Mrs. Dudley's son, sir' (was the reply of his maid). 'Dudley? (repeated he) but it cannot be, and yet I never saw so strong a likeness. Tell me, does he resemble his mother?' The woman's answer in the affirmative, appeared to agitate him very much, and he enquired where I lived, which the servant made no difficulty in informing him of.

"This took place two days before that on which you left town, and the very morning of your departure, as I stood for a moment at the drawing room window, I saw Mr. Pembroke on the opposite side of the street, he was walking slowly, and had his eyes fixed upon the window where I stood. Almost doubting the evidence of my sen-

ness, I threw up the sash; he saw me, and darting across, gained admittance to me in a moment.

"'Ellen (exclaimed he), base, faithless, perjured woman! spite of the pains you have taken to avoid me, I have at last an opportunity to upbraid you with your perfidy.' What more he would have added, was prevented by my falling senseless at his feet. When I recovered, an explanation took place, and I learned that we were the victims of a deep laid plot. Lord Robert had intercepted my letter, in which I stated to Percival the reasons why I had left my house. This letter his lordship destroyed, and substituted a forged one in its place; the contents of which astonished Percival; they were, that I was completely tired of the recluse life I led, and as there was no immediate prospect of changing it, without involving him in the most unpleasant circumstances, I had determined to ac-

cept the offer of a man of immense fortune, and accompany him abroad.

"The hand was so good an imitation of mine, that Pembroke could scarcely doubt of its being my writing; and when he found that I had left my house, he execrated me as the most perfidious of beings. A paragraph that appeared in one of the morning papers, and was pointed out to him by his uncle, was, he thought, a confirmation of my supposed infidelity; it announced the departure of the Honourable Mr. Danvers, for America, and mentioned, that he had prevailed upon a young and lovely woman to accompany him as his *chère amie*. Pembroke suffered not less than myself from this plan that severed us, and he gladly accepted his uncle's invitation to accompany him to Spain; where, in two years, Lord Robert died. Percival had been some months in England, and he had diligently sought me at every place

of public amusement, but in vain, when at the moment that he least expected it, chance brought about our meeting.

"This explanation overwhelmed me with unhappiness; and bitterly did I now regret the moment in which I had accepted your proposals, to deprive Pembroke of his child, was not to be thought of; for myself, my future plan is fixed in the most humble retirement; and equally distant from the man whom I loved, and him whom I had injured, I purpose to wear out my future days; for every sentiment of pride and delicacy, forbade my listening to Percival's generous offer to forget the past.

"And now, my lord, farewel for ever, Heaven only knows how deeply I regret the pain, which I am sensible this discovery will cause you; may you in a more pure and fortunate connection, lose those bitter reflections, which my duplicity will occasion you. Be-

lieve me, that to know you had recovered that peace which I can never again hope to taste, would be a cordial to the heart of

"ELLEN DUDLEY."

The perusal of this letter, nearly unsettled the reason of the wretched Montalva; driven almost to frenzy, by remorse and despair, the affection which he felt for the little Stephano was the sole sweetener of his existence; from his supposed child must be derived the only comfort that he could promise himself in this world, and to the next the guilty and unhappy man dared not look. At one moment, he was inclined to suppose that Stephano was indeed his son, and that Ellen deprived him of the child, merely to conciliate the favour of her former lover; the next instant he recollected the circumstances of the birth of the child, Ellen's lowness of spirits, and the solemn manner in which she had implored him to

e a father to her child; these circumtances convinced him that her tale vas indeed true, and that the child he iad so fondly cherished as his own, vas Pembroke's.

"The justice of Heaven pursues me, (thought he), and all efforts to evade it are vain: I will return to Naples, and shut myself for ever in the Castle de Rosonio, I will no longer seek, by mixing with society, to regain that peace, which it is my lot never more to taste."

This resolution he determined to put immediately in practice; but a chance meeting with the Marquis de Santenos, delayed his doing so for a few days.

The marquis expressed the liveliest joy at seeing him, and made him many friendly reproaches for not delivering his letter of introduction to Lord Clerinont. "You have suffered much, my poor friend (said de Santenos, in a tone of commisseration), you are so altered as scarcely to be known, but

the society and attentions of your friends, will, I trust, restore you to your former self."

The kind intentions of the amiable marquis were however of no avail: the count obstinately persisted in returning to Naples within a few days. De Santenos was now easier in his mind, and his spirits were better: he had visited England, accompanied by the marchioness on the occasion of the nuptials of Lord Clerimont, with the lady to whom he had been so long attached; Montalva could not refuse the request of the marquis, to suffer himself to be introduced to Lord Clerimont, but the sight of the pure happiness which that nobleman appeared to enjoy, as well as the recovered peace of his friend De Santenos, and the delight which the marchioness apparently felt, from the felicity of her husband and her friends, was an aggravation of the horrors that preyed upon the mind of the count; he bade the marquis and his lady an eter-

nal farewel, and quitted the hospitable shores of England for those of his native Naples, where he arrived in safety.

He hastened forward to his estate, where he found every thing in order; his return was a cause of regret, rather than joy, to his dependants, who soon found that time had neither meliorated his temper, nor enlarged his benevolence.

While the consciousness of guilt was withering the form, and rending the heart of Montalva, the innocent Isabel, in the solitude of St. Teresa, was daily increasing in goodness and beauty; she was indeed beloved by the whole convent, and though Montalva had not expressed a wish that she should acquire any of the feminine accomplishments usually taught to the children of people of rank, yet the abbess had her carefully instructed in them, and well did her capacity and diligence repay the pains bestowed upon her. Soon after Isabel became an inmate of

St. Teresa, the Signora Sforza placed her youngest daughter in the convent. Laura was about the age of Isabel, and the childish partiality which they soon discovered for each other, ripened *in* time into the tenderest friendship. The Signora Sforza, who was passionately fond of her daughter, soon became attached to Isabel; and the lady abbess could not refuse her repeated requests, that the young orphan should sometimes accompany Laura in her visits to her mother's castle.

The signora was a widow, and of large fortune; to inherit which, she had two daughters and a son, whom she loved with more than maternal fondness. Julia, the eldest, was lovely in her person, but her haughty and ungentle temper, was a source of uneasiness to her mother, who had tried every lenient method to reclaim her, but in vain. Laura, both in person and disposition, strongly resembled her mother: graceful, feminine, and interest-

ıg, she was formed rather to be loved ıan admired; her features were not ɜgularly beautiful, but the sweetness of ɛr countenance, the mild lustre of her ull, blue, expressive eyes, was sufficient o disarm the severity of even the cold-ɜt critic: and no one ever gazed upon Laura de Sforza without allowing her the meed of beauty.

Alberto, the pride and hope of his mother, gave promise even in the dawn of his youth, of every great and noble quality; he was not indeed free from faults, his temper was haughty and impetuous; keenly alive to the smallest insult, he resented it with the greatest asperity: yet, open to conviction, and attentive to the voice of deserved reproof, sullenness, or malignity, had no place in his disposition. His mother was not blind to the faults of his temper, but she was aware that they were faults which time would correct, and greatly indeed were they over-balanced by his virtues.

His sister Laura was Alberto's favourite, and he soon loved Isabel also as a sister. The family of Sforza had free access to Laura, and she scarcely went to the grate to receive her mother or her brother unaccompanied by Isabel. The lady abbess and the signora had been friends from infancy, and she rejoiced that her dear child, as she fondly called Isabel, was the distinguished favourite of the Signora Sforza.

"Look at this portrait (said the signora one day to the mother of Teresa), and tell me whether you perceive any resemblance between it and any one whom you have seen."

The abbess gazed upon it for some time in silence; at last (she said), "the countenance, though handsome, has an expression of haughtiness, that totally disfigures it; yet, was it not for that circumstance, I should think that in the soft features of Isabel I could trace a likeness."

"I have thought so frequently (cried

signora); the expression of the face
leed is different, but in the features
re is a resemblance. You have said,
it you know not ought of Isabel's
nily, and I am ignoraut for whom
s portrait was drawn; but from the
nner in which I became possessed of
I have reason to believe the original
s of rank."

"You know (continued she), that
as destined for the veil, and, during
noviciate in the convent of St. Clara,
Rome, a lady young, and of noble
pearance, applied to the abbess for
mission to reside in the convent;
r dignified and elegant manners, as
ll as the large sum that she offered
her pension, made the holy mother
dily grant her request. Scarcely ever
I I behold a form and face so beauti-
; but she appeared a prey to the
epest melancholy; and, after a little
ne, she avowed a resolution of tak-
the veil. I had just entered upon
noviciate when she became an in-

mate of the convent, and every day increased my reluctance to a monastic life. I was aware of the arts generally practised by the nuns, to hide from the eyes of the novices the gloomy destiny to which they are about to devote themselves; but with me those arts were not practised, because, being brought up in the convent from my infancy, and being a destined victim, they thought the trouble was unnecessary, and would, from my knowledge of their artifices, be useless; but with Maria, as she was named, every stratagem was put in practice that could allure her to become a member of the sisterhood; she appeared to receive their caresses and attentions with indifference, but she still persevered in her intention to become a nun. One day I had, for the first time, an opportunity of speaking to her in private, and I resolved not to lose it.

"'You are about to become our sister, I find' (said I).

"'Yes' (replied she, without raising

er eyes, which, as usual, were fixed pon the ground).

"'Ah! (cried I) did you but know he lot which you are voluntarily going o embrace, I am well convinced you would shrink from it with horror.' I proceeded to paint, in the most energetic terms, the various misèries of a monastic life, and she heard me without interruption.

"'I am aware (cried she, when I ad concluded), that all you have said s true; but it will not, cannot change ny resolution. Never again can I taste f happiness, and in the gloom of a loister I cannot be more miserable han in the gaiety and bustle of the 'orld.'

"'Whatever disappointments you ay have met with (cried I), time will erhaps obliterate the remembrance of, nd if the world is displeasing to you, vhy cannot you remain here, and yet reserve the power of returning to the world when you please?'

"She looked up, and I saw that her fine eyes were swimming in tears.

"'I have been in the world (said she, emphatically), would to Heaven I had never entered it! but never, never can I mix with society again. I thank you, my kind friend, for advice which, I own, might be a means of saving any one but myself from a destiny the most painful. My doom is fixed, and nothing can change it.'

"Never before had I beheld such an expression of despair, as marked the features of Maria during this speech, and most sincerely did I commisserate her sorrow; but delicacy forbade my saying more. I pressed her hand in silence, and left her.

"Through the kindness of my aunt, Signora Florentini, who saw, and pitied the reluctance with which I submitted to the will of my family, I was rescued from a life of monastic slavery. My generous aunt offered me a daughter's portion, and my parents, to my

eat joy, permitted me to leave the nvent.

" In some time after my departure, aria took the veil, and the sisterhood re unanimous in their praises of her ty, and the strictness with which she rformed the duties which she had posed upon herself. Her perseve- ice in the austerities of her profes- n, in a short time injured her health, t no intreaties could prevail upon r to relax from her severity. I fre- ently visited the convent, and I saw, th regret, that Maria grew every day aker, and more languid; she always peared to receive me with pleasure, l I was delighted to find, that her nd grew more tranquil than it had en when I first knew her.

" Some time elapsed without my ing her, and I heard that she was ngerously ill. I hastened to the nvent, and the lady abbess informed that the physician thought she had t many days to live. ' She has

mentioned you several times, daughter (cried she), and I think the sight of you will do her good, poor child! Her sufferings have been great, and she has borne them in the most exemplary manner. Never did I witness, in one so young, such piety, such resignation! She is indeed an honour to our order."

"One of the sisterhood conducted me to the cell of Maria, who was unable, from extreme weakness, to leave her bed. On seeing me, she extended her hand, and a faint glow suffused her still lovely countenance.

"'I thought you had quite forgot me' (said she, in a tone so hollow that I involuntarily started). I took the hand that she held out to me; but when I contemplated her pale and emaciated countenance, I could not repress my feelings, and I burst into tears.

"'Do not weep for me (said she, pressing my hand), my sufferings are near their close. Heaven only knows

how severe they have been; but they are past, and I look forward in humble hope and confidence that my offences are forgiven.' She paused a few moments, and then continued: 'Perhaps we may not meet again; let me now thank you for that sympathy, which, though it has not been acknowledged, has been felt. When I entered this house, I thought my heart was shut against every human being; your kindness taught it once more to throb with gratitude towards a fellow creature. I reviewed my own conduct; the painful reflection burst in upon me, that all I suffered was my own fault. The natural pride of my character began to give way to the humiliating consciousness of error; yet the passion which made me fly from society, and which I still vainly endeavoured to subdue, preyed upon my heart; and even now it prevents my raising, as I ought, my whole soul to Heaven; but that Almighty Being, who expects not perfection from his creatures,

will, I trust, look down with an eye of pardon on the weak and erring being, who humbly supplicates that mercy, which she is conscious she has not deserved.'

"'Pardon me, dearest Maria (cried I), you judge yourself too severely; surely whatever errors you might have fallen into, your penitence must have more than expiated. Tranquillise your mind then, my friend, and if there is yet a ray of hope, if, as I would fain flatter myself, your recovery is yet possible, your future days may yet be happy.'

"'Hope (said she) is over; over did I say? no, my hope, my wish is death; Oh! I feel that life to me would be misery; but as I may not see you again, let me undeceive you in one point. I am free from what the world calls crime; I have done nothing to dishonour myself, or the noble family from which I sprung. From an unhappy want of stability in my character, the fatal error that poisoned my

life has arisen. Bitterly, oh! how bitterly, has it been expiated.'

"She drew from beneath her pillow a case, from which she took this miniature. 'I have promised (said she) never to part with this while I exist, and my word shall be religiously kept, though the motives that influenced me to make that promise have long since ceased. After my death, I would wish it to be yours; it is the portrait of a man whom I once *thought* I loved, and while the delusion lasted, it was very dear to me; but it has long, long been as odious to my sight, as it was formerly pleasing, and my promise solemnly given to keep it has been the only reason why I have done so.'

"She stopped, apparently exhausted, and, after sitting with her for some time, I took my leave. Poor Maria! she was indeed a prophet, for we met no more. That night she expired; and oh! may my last moments be like hers. She met death with a

pious fortitude, that robbed it of its horrors, and her spirit appeared impatient to burst its frail tenement, and soar to a better world.

"The portrait was, at her request, delivered to me, and I have ever since carefully preserved it. Its resemblance to Isabel struck me, but I thought that might have been only fancy, till you agreed with me in opinion."

"I am sorry that you know not the name of the original (cried the abbess), for I own that I wish to penetrate the mystery of Isabel's birth; not from idle curiosity, but from real interest for the sweet orphan, whom I love as a daughter."

"And well worthy is she of your affection (replied the signora). Sweet Isabel! my heart too adopts thee for its own."

"I do not think (cried the lady abbess), that Isabel, though destined for a religious life, and educated in a convent, is partial to it; yet, alas! she

will not, I fear, be allowed any other choice. I am convinced, were Isabel at liberty, her heart would prompt her to remain in the abode of her early years; but I know she fears the vows. She spoke the other day in terms of enthusiasm of the fortitude with which sister Frances had pronounced them."

"'A life of religious retirement (said I to her), is the choice of sister Frances; she has lived in the world; she has been disgusted with its vain and empty pleasures. The time she spent in our convent previous to her noviciate, convinced her that here she was likely to find peace; and though still young, beautiful, and rich, she quitted the world without a sigh.'

"'Happy sister Frances!' (exclaimed Isabel). Oh! how much is she to be envied; she had the power to chuse her destiny.'

"The unconscious emphasis which the dear orphan laid upon her words, gave me, for the first time, an idea

that she disliked a monastic life, and my heart bled for her; since, alas! if my fears are just, her portion of temporal happiness will be small."

"She cannot be forced to take the veil (cried the signora); and surely her mysterious protector would not be barbarous enough to sacrifice her happiness. Willingly would I receive her as my third daughter, if he would yield her to me."

"A short time (said the abbess) must decide her destiny; the Virgin grant that it may be a happy one."

The signora joined her friend most heartily in this wish, and they parted.

CHAP. IX.

ISABEL now approached her sixteenth year, and Montalva had signified to the lady abbess at that age she was to commence her noviciate.

"In three months Isabel takes the white veil (said the signora, to her daughter Julia, in the presence of Alberto). How is it that there are moments when the mind shrinks from those truths, which it has been accustomed to hear? Alberto Sforza had known for years that Isabel was destined to the veil, he had loved her as a sister, but how he might [illegible] loss of her so-

ciety was a question that he had never asked himself; now, the conviction burst upon him, that she was dearer to his heart than the life-blood that flowed within it. His instant change of countenance caught the signora's attention, and she tenderly enquired whether he was well? he answered, yes; and left her that he might ruminate in silence on the discovery that he had made.

"And, why (thought he, when he was alone), why dearest Isabel, should I lose you? beloved as you are by my mother, surely she will not object to receive you as a daughter, and what objection can be made to your choice by your friends? Friends, they do not deserve the name, for so many years to let a lovely orphan remain unnoticed; what hearts must they have, but thou wast not formed, sweet Isabel, to whither in the gloom of a convent; thy mild virtues are fitted to adorn a worthier lot; and oh! how blest, how transcendently

blest; shall I be, if it is my fate to rescue thee from the one for which thou art designed!"

Such were the thoughts and wishes of Alberto; nor did he hesitate to disclose them to his mother. Signora Sforza had some of the pride of blood, which distinguishes most noble Neapolitans; she loved Isabel, fondly loved her, yet, could she have wished that Alberto's choice had fallen elsewhere; but when her son, her beloved son, knelt at her feet and implored her not to destroy the happiness of his life; her pride gave way to her maternal tenderness, and she consented to his espousing Isabel, if the consent of her protector could be obtained. The signora wished Isabel to remain ignorant of their intentions, till the lady abbess should have heard from Montalva, who had assumed to her the name of Valdorno. It was now near the time when the abbess expected a remittance, which he always took care punctually to send,

and by his messenger, the signora proposed making known to him her wish to call Isabel by the tender name of daughter.

"I do not (cried she) think that he will object to such an union for his ward, since he seemed to say that motives of prudence influenced Isabel's friends in chusing that lot for her, which you are so anxious to rescue her from; but as it is possible that they may object to her marrying, and as in that case—"

"Dearest mother (interrupted Alberto), do not, I beseech you, conjure up so terrible a phantom; you will not grant my wishes by halves; how know I that Alberto's hand would be preferred by Isabel to a monastic life? my mother, I beseech you, suffer me but to receive from her own dear lips, a confession that I am not indifferent to her, and I will then cheerfully submit to wait any time that you please for this man's approbation."

"You are unreasonable, Alberto (said the signora), but such is always the case. If our wishes are granted in one point, we know not how to restrain them in any other; I will, myself speak to Isabel, and then if you must plead your own cause, I shall not prevent you."

Sforza rapturously thanked his mother, who soon after this conversation opened her heart to the lady abbess. "I own to you my friend (cried she), that as the last male representative of a noble family, I could have wished that Alberto's choice, had fallen elsewhere, yet Isabel is very dear to me, but I much fear that there are circumstances attending her birth, which may render the alliance, in the eye of the world, degrading to Alberto; yet, to cross his affections, fixed as they are on Isabel, would be cruel; and when I think of her gentleness, her sweetness of temper, and the thousand graces of her mind

and person, I can neither wonder at, nor oppose the choice of my son."

"May every blessing attend their union (said the abbess), and with such a wife as our Isabel, Sforza must be blessed; I am not surprised at your generosity in consenting to his happiness; wave but one circumstance, and Isabel is a wife of whom a monarch might be proud."

"True, she is so (replied the signora); I meant to have opened the business to her myself, but you, I think, can do it better; there is one thing that I could wish; should my son's proposals meet with Isabel's approbation, should Alberto know that her pure and ingenuous heart is his, no power on earth, I am well convinced, could force him to resign her, and you are well aware that, from her peculiar situation, the union of Alberto and herself may be impossible, should this man on whom, I fear, she wholly depends, refuse his consent."

"I hope, nay, I think, that he will not," cried the abbess.

"I hope so too, most sincerely (said the signora), all I wish is, that our Isabel would strongly impress Alberto with the necessity there is of submission to his decree."

"That I am sure she will not fail to do, for she has long considered that her fate is in his hands (said the abbess), I long for the time that we may expect his messenger."

"And so in truth do I (cried the signora). Oh! my friend, how many anxieties rend the heart of a mother; susceptible as my Alberto is, should his wishes be disappointed, his early hopes of happiness blighted, how fatal will such a blow be to the peace of his future life."

"Let us hope better (said the abbess); I will prepare Isabel for the good fortune which awaits her, and speedily, I hope, that ours and the dear orphan's suspence, will be happily ended."

Most fervently, did the signora join in the wish of her friend; and that day the abbess determined to acquaint Isabel with the passion of Alberto.

"We may soon, my child (cried she), expect to hear from your guardian. Isabel sighed. Tell me Isabel the cause of that sigh," continued the abbess.

A crimson glow suffused the cheek of the lovely orphan, but for some moments she could not speak, at last she timidly replied, "indeed I know not, dearest mother, how to account for my wayward heart; I love our sisters, I love you: ah! heaven knows how truly the poor orphan, fostered by your bounty, returns the affection you have always shewn her: yet, when I think of making a solemn, and irrevocable vow, never to pass these walls, my breast is filled with anguish, and my eyes with tears."

"Remember, my dearest Isabel, those lessons of piety and resignation

which you so early shewed a disposition to imbibe (cried her maternal friend); anguish and despondency, my child, ought to arise only from a consciousness of guilt, and from that consciousness the heart of my Isabel will, I trust, be always free. Mistake me not so far as to suppose I wish to influence your choice, if a choice was indeed allowed you; I wish only to fortify your mind, to enable you to submit with cheerfulness to what may be unavoidable; but on the contrary, should the Signor Valdorno consent to your quitting us, most willing shall I forego, for your happiness, that pleasure which your society has for years afforded me."

Isabel's tears bore testimony to her sense of the holy mother's kindness, and she cast herself, weeping, into her arms.

"Oh! (sobbed she) how is it possible for me to repine, when I think that my future days are to be spent with you? pity and forgive your Isabel,

who will conquer this weakness, of which she is indeed ashamed."

The abbess pressed her to her bosom.

"Thou hast no cause for shame, my dear and innocent girl (cried she), I know not whether I ought to inform you, and yet my word is pledged to do so; there is a chance, that if motives of prudence alone influence the Signor Valdorno in destining you to a monastic life, you may escape the veil.

"Alberto Sforza," she paused, and a glance at Isabel betrayed to her penetrating eye the reason of that reluctance which her young friend had expressed to a religious life: the heart of Isabel had unconsciously imbibed a passion for Alberto; treated by him as a beloved sister, she never suspected that her regard was different to what she would have felt for a brother; but this mention of his name gave birth to a thousand hopes and wishes that she had never hitherto dared to in-

ge, and her secret was for the first
ıe known to herself.

The abbess (without seeming to
tice her confusion) continued —" Al-
:rto Sforza loves you." The blood
ıshed tumultuously into the fair face
nd neck of Isabel, while in low, but
ielighted accents, she exclaimed, " good
Heavens! is it possible?" " His passion
I perceive is not displeasing to you
(said the abbess), but this, dear Isabel,
is a subject on which you must not
indulge too much hope; recollect the
power which the Signor Valdorno pos-
sesses, and remember that we know
not how he may exert it." The flush of
hope and exultation gave place to a
deadly paleness, but Isabel continued
silent.

" On your prudence, my beloved
child (said the lady abbess), Signora
Sforza and myself rely; Alberto has
received from his mother permission to
open to you his heart, but my Isabel
must not let him see her's; if he is

quite assured of being beloved; reason and prudence will plead in vain, and should Valdorno refuse his consent, we shall have, from the impetuosity of Alberto, much to fear; remember then dear Isabel, that on your guardian's decision every thing must depend."

Isabel promised an implicit compliance with the wishes of her friend, and the lady abbess left her to her own reflections; she could not for some time arrange her thoughts. Alberto's passion, his mother's goodness in sanctioning it, and the strong probability, which to her appeared almost a certainty, that her guardian would rejoice in such an offer for her, formed altogether such a picture of enchanting, unhoped for happiness, that she could scarcely believe it real, and it was not till tears relieved her full heart, that she became sufficiently calm to pour out her whole soul in prayer before the throne of grace. Though educated in a convent, the piety of Isabel was free from superst-

tion, but not wholly untinctured by enthusiasm; with the most fervent devotion did she beseech the assistance of her patroness, the Virgin, and she arose from prayer with a mind soothed and relieved.

Hard, however, was her task when Alberto opened to her his whole heart; the secret of hers, hovered on her lips, but prudence suppressed it; yet had Alberto no reason to complain of her behaviour, she did not indeed own her passion; but her varying countenance, her eyes, in which every emotion of her soul was painted, told a tale that her tongue refused to utter; and Sforza quitted her happiest of the happy.

Twelve years nearly had elapsed since Montalva had placed Isabel in the solitude of St. Teresa: and vainly had he sought in every pursuit an antidote for the remorse which preyed upon his life. For years past he had resided at the castle of D'Rosonio, and lost in gloom and despondency, he renounced

all idea of ever again mixing with the world. One evening, as he sat lost in melancholy musing, the distant sound of laughter struck his ear, he listened, and heard it more distinctly; he summoned one of his domestics, and sternly enquired the cause of their riotous merriment.

"So please you my lord (replied Antonio), a wandering minstrel besought from us a shelter for the night, he is in truth not meanly skilled in melody, and it was one of his romances that caused the laughter which has disturbed your excellenza."

A low, but sweetly plaintive strain, at this moment arrested the count's attention; he waved his hand as a signal for Antonio to throw open the folding-doors —again the strain vibrated on his ear.

"Thou art right, Antonio, this minstrel is indeed a master of his art (said he), bring him before me."

"The delighted Antonio flew to obey the orders of his lord. From the

habitual sternness of the count, he had feared a severe reprimand, for the voice of mirth was rarely heard in Montalva's castle; and never had one of his domestics seen his cheek dimpled by a smile. The minstrel now entered the chamber, and for a moment the eye of Montalva rested upon him with curiosity and surprise. He appeared of middle age, his countenance was fine, though pale; and there was an indescribable expression in his dark and piercing eye, that rivetted the attention of the count. Antonio, in a low voice, bade him make his obeisance, and he obeyed; but the bow of the minstrel was not the lowly bend of a vassal to his lord, it was slight and haughty.

"Montalva motioned Antonio to leave them, and then desired the minstrel to play again the plaintive air that had caught his ear before he saw him; the minstrel began, and with an attention the most profound, Montalva

listened to the sweet strains of his harp; they were indeed such as:

"Take prisoner the wrapt soul and lap it in elysium."

At length they ceased. "Go on," (said the count). "Would not your lordship wish to hear a sprightlier strain," demanded the minstrel.

"No (replied the count), I have no relish for the sound of joy."

"'Tis strange, (said the minstrel), the wretch oppressed by poverty or guilt, may indeed be deaf to the voice of joy, but why should the lord of these rich domains be a prey to gloom? why should the brow of the noble Montalva be overcast with care?"

"What! (haughtily exclaimed the count), darest thou enquire into the cause of my sorrows? rash presumptuous man, retire, and thank the obscurity that shields thee from my resentment; a lowly minstrel is beneath the notice of the Count Montalva."

"The lowly minstrel need not thank

the clemency of the proud Montalva; I am surrounded by agents most potent, though to thee invisible (cried he), I came here thy friend, but these taunts have changed my purpose. Know, that thou standest in the presence of one to whom every action of thy life is known. Yes, thou can'st insult a lowly minstrel; thou can'st boast thy rank and power; say how acquired?—The murdered D'Rosonio—The infant Isabel—."

"Astonishment and horror rendered Montalva motionless; he gazed in silence on the minstrel, whose countenance might have dismayed even a heart unappalled by guilt; his large dark eyes were rivetted on Montalva, while round his mouth played a smile of demoniac joy at witnessing the agony he had caused."

"I know not (at length exclaimed Montalva), by what means my crimes are discovered, nor wherefore thou thus rendest my heart, by recalling to my mind what I thought hidden from every

human eyes; say, minstrel, how can these horrors known to thee?"

"By no earthly means (replied the minstrel); but speak not thus Montalva, let monks and women talk of crime, it exists but in idea; D'Rosonio stood between thee and happiness, thou did'st right to destroy him; but why does Isabel exist?"

"What can I have to fear from her?" (cried Montalva.)

"Every thing (exclaimed the minstrel), even now is her hand solicited by one of the noblest youths of Naples; her birth may be discovered——."

"Impossible?" (interrupted Montalva).

"No! not impossible; I tell thee it *may* be discovered (continued the minstrel), what then becomes of thee?"

Montalva was silent.

"Another blow (said the subtle tempter), and all is sure."

"Again imbrue my hands in blood? (cried Montalva). Oh! no, no."

"Thou should'st have thought thus

before thou *didst* imbrue thy hands in blood (said the minstrel, with a malignant smile); but mark me, Montalva, I came here thy friend, why I am so it is not of import to thee to know. I tell thee, and thou wilt find it true, that one only means is left to hide what thou callest thy guilt from the world. While Isabel D'Rosonio exists thou art not safe; think of this warning, and if thou hast the spirit of a man, take it."

A gleam of blue and sulphurous light flashed round the minstrel, and in an instant he vanished from before the eyes of the astonished count; for some moments the greatest horror took possession of the soul of Montalva; when he could reflect, the only conjecture he thought it possible to form was, that his visitor must be a magician. He had avowed that his knowledge of Montalva's guilt was not obtained by earthly means, yet, wherefore had he for twelve years kept the secret, and why did he now urge the wretched

Montalva to plunge still deeper in guilt?

"No, Isabel; (exclaimed he, mentally) no consideration, save my own safety, shall prevail on me to sacrifice thy life."

He now summoned his domestics, and smoothing his brow, enquired whether the minstrel had departed? They all declared they had not seen him, and Montalva affected to suppose that he had quitted the castle unobserved. Such was the horror of the count's mind, that he did not dare to remain entirely alone; he commanded Antonio to remain in an anti-chamber, and while lost in a maze of distracting thoughts, he paced his apartments. He every moment expected again to behold his late terrific visitor.

More than twelve years had now elapsed since the murder of the count, and the voice of conscience Montalva had supposed was all that he could possibly have to dread; but this mys-

terious minstrel had awakened every dormant fear,—and the count resolved on a journey to the convent of St. Teresa, to learn if indeed he had spoken truth.

"I will have her professed as soon as possible (thought he), and then minstrel I shall not heed thy prophecies."

He left the castle as he pretended on business, which carried him to Naples, and his departure was indeed a day of jubilee to his domestics, who were now for the first time at liberty to indulge in that noisy gaiety which distinguishes the lower order of people, but which their lord's severity had hitherto repressed.

Montalva, after stopping a few days at Naples, set out unattended for the convent of St. Teresa; his arrival filled the bosom of the lady abbess with pleasure, she hastened to receive him, and sent to summon Isabel to the grate.—A strange and new sensation filled the

breast of Montalva, when he beheld the lovely girl whom he had rendered an orphan; he was not surprised at feeling remorse on seeing one whom he had so greatly injured; but how could he account for the inexplicable pleasure which the sight of Isabel occasioned him. Lovely as she was, the heart of Montalva had ceased to throb at the sight of beauty, nor was the sentiment he felt, while he gazed on the blushing Isabel, of that nature which beauty creates; it was neither desire nor admiration, but a feeling equally tender and pure. He recovered self-command enough to express his pleasure at the sight of Isabel, whom he informed that it was his intention that she should immediately take the veil.

The suddenness of the information robbed Isabel of that fortitude which she thought she had acquired, and she burst into tears.

"How is this? (cried Montalva angrily) have you not long known that

you were destined for a religious life, and do you now——."

"Pardon me for interrupting you, signor (said the mother of St. Teresa). Retire my child (added she, turning to Isabel), I wish to speak to the signor in private."

Isabel curtsied in silence, and obeyed.

CHAP. X.

"CAN you, madam (cried Montalva), as soon as they were alone, inform me whence springs the reluctance which Isabel expresses to a destiny for which she has been intended from the first moment she saw the light; a destiny which she *must* embrace?"

"I regret to hear you say so, signor (replied the lady abbess), for it is one, at which the soul of Isabel recoils; but, perhaps, when you have heard what I am authorized to propose, you may change your purpose. Alberto Sforza, of a noble Neapolitan family,

and possessed of a princely fortune, solicits in marriage the hand of your ward."

The abbess paused, and looked earnestly at the signor, but no expression of pleasure animated his countenance; his features were convulsed, and he vainly strove to hide his agitation under an appearance of anger.

"I know not (continued she), what the family of Isabel may be, but she is the child of my fondest affection; and Signor Sforza has my warmest wishes for his success."

"Isabel then loses the signor," (interrupted Montalva).

"A confession of her affection for him has never yet passed her lips (said the abbess), but her heart may be read in her expressive countenance; and that heart I am convinced is Sforza's."

'Tis well, madam (haughtily replied the count); a convent is the last place where I should have supposed an amour would be carried on, and a girl

destined to the veil, I had thought you would have secluded from every eye."

"Hear me, signor (mildly interrupted the lady abbess), when you placed Isabel under my care, you told me that it was your wish she should, at a proper age, become a member of our sisterhood, but you represented her as an orphan without fortune. The Signor Sforza might aspire to a rich and highly-born bride; how then could I suppose it wrong to sanction his passion for your ward? yet Isabel has not violated the duty which she may owe you; that she is decidedly against a monastic life, I am well convinced: but I also know, that she will not become the wife of any man in defiance of your wish, if you have a right to insist upon her obedience."

The abbess ceased, and Montalva knew not how to reply; at length, he said, "there are many reasons why Isabel must take the veil, what those

reasons are, I will acquaint you to-morrow, if you will then allow me the honour of seeing you." The abbess acquiesced, and the count took his leave.

When he returned to the inn, where he intended to remain during the few days of his stay, he shut himself in his apartment, to consider what measures he should take.

"Minstrel, I fear thou wast right," (burst involuntarily from his lips, and in an instant the form of the minstrel appeared before him.)

"Thou art now convinced, Montalva (cried he, while the astonished count sunk motionless on a couch), that I told thee truth, wouldst thou wish to know more?"

"First tell me, I beseech thee (said Montalva), to what, or whom I speak; art thou indeed of earthly mold, or ——." "Why this enquiry (cried the minstrel), thinkest thou not I am thy friend?"

He fixed upon the count those piercing eyes that had before struck horror to the soul of Montalva.

"I read thy heart (continued he), thou thinkest me a demon." Montalva shuddered, "whether I am so or not, what matters it to thee? I have told thee what *has* happened, I will show thee what *must* happen, if thou hast not a spirit to prevent it."

He drew from beneath his cloak a mirror, which he held before Montalva, who, with a convulsive shudder, closed his eyes, and inarticulately tried to pray.

"This pious mockery, suits well with the actions of Montalva (cried the demon, for it was indeed an infernal spirit, that stood before the count), thou hast need of prayer, soon will the husband of Isabel demand of thee the domains of his bride, soon will thy public and ignominious death appease the manes of the murdered Count D'Rosonio."

"It cannot be," (cried the agonized Montalva). "Look and convince thyself" (continued the demon).

Montalva cast his eyes upon the mirror; he beheld Isabel weeping in the arms of a young and noble looking man; presently they vanished, and he saw them before an altar, the priest appeared to give them the nuptial benediction, and the bridegroom embraced Isabel. This scene also disappeared, and Montalva saw himself in the hands of officers of justice; near him were placed implements of torture, and the officers approached him with menacing looks, as if prepared to bind him on rack."

"Are there no means to prevent this?" (exclaimed he).

"Yes; one, and only one (replied the fiend), Isabel must die."

"No (cried Montalva); I will fly from Naples: of the count's death there can be no proof; nor see I how Isabel's birth could ever be discovered."

"You thought yourself secure of Anselmo's fidelity" (replied the demon).

"I knew myself so" (interrupted the count), "thou art mistaken (said the fiend), the secret of thy design to remove the Lady Isabel, was intrusted by him to a woman now in the service of Signor Sforza's mother, through her will Isabel's birth become known, and thy injustice to the orphan of D'Rosonio, will excite suspicion of her father's fate. When groaning on the rack, an acknowledgment of thy crime shall burst from thy lips; thou wilt then wish that thou hadst taken my counsel; thou wilt then own, that the death of Isabel D'Rosonio would have insured the life of Montalva."

"She shall perish!" (exclaimed the almost frantic count).

"Thou speakest now like the undaunted Montalva (cried the fiend); away with the girlish weakness, called compassion. If Isabel dies, thou art

secure; if she lives, a disgraceful death awaits thee: thou can'st not hesitate."

"I will not, (returned Montalva), would she had perished with her father."

"Aye (cried the demon), that would have been indeed a secure blow, but it is not yet too late. Farewel, Montalva, my friendship thou mayest command."

"The minstrel vanished, and fain would Montalva have persuaded himself that what he had seen was fancy; the distracting images which the minstrel had conjured up of destruction to himself, seemed but too probable, and to remove and sacrifice the hapless Isabel was, he persuaded himself, the only step that could insure his safety: yet, how to take her immediately from the convent without exciting suspicion, he knew not. How did he now wish (as in an agony of despair he execrated the past) that he could recal the life of D'Rosonio; yet, it was not remorse, it

was not a recollection of the noble and disinterested friendship of the count, which racked the breast of his assassin; from selfish motives alone would he have recalled the murdered count to life."

"Never (exclaimed he), since his death have I known a moment's peace; and now to perish ignominiously! No, by Heaven! that at least shall be prevented—Isabel shall die; her death will secure my life and honour. And why should I feel reluctant to destroy her? one of us must perish, and can I submit to be that one? No, self-defence authorizes the act?"

With this wretched sophistry did the unhappy count try to reconcile himself to the murder of Isabel; but it was sometime before he could fabricate a tale to impose upon the lady abbess; at length he thought of one, that would, he hoped, lull suspicion to sleep, and early the next morning he repaired to the convent.

With well-dissembled reluctance he old the abbess that he felt himself ompelled to divulge the secret of Isabel's birth: she was, he said, the daughter of a noble Neapolitan lady, who, during the absence of her husband, had an intrigue with a man of igh rank, the fruit of which was Isael; as the lady dreaded that her husand might discover her infidelity, she ad, as soon as Isabel was born, placed er with a nurse in an obscure situaion. The father of the child, who, he dded, was his particular friend, had, hen she was nearly four years of age, ntrusted him with the secret, for the urpose of getting him to place her in he convent of St. Teresa.

" It is (continued he), the will of oth her parents that she shall be proessed as soon as the term of her noviiate expires, and it was their desire hat she should instantly enter upon it; f she consents it is well; if not, my rders are to remove her immediately."

"But surely, signor (cried the abbess), if the secret of Isabel's birth is still preserved inviolate, if the Signora Sforza and her son are still anxious for her alliance, and that I am sure they will be, the parents of Isabel cannot object to ——."

"I can only tell you, madam (interrupted Montalva), that were a prince to seek in marriage the hand of Isabel, her parents would refuse him: her destiny is fixed, and no power on earth can change it."

The abbess, dearly as she loved the interesting girl, could not oppose the will of her parents. With tears did she reveal to Isabel what she had heard, and with a firmness, which to the abbess appeared surprising, did she refuse the veil.

"I cannot now, dearest mother (cried she), ever hope to be the wife of Sforza, even were my parents to consent to our union, and his noble mother and himself would deign to over-

ook the ignominy of my birth, yet, never could the offspring of guilt aspire to his hand, whatever my unhappy mother may command, save only that, I will willingly obey."

"Thou hast sealed thy doom," (mentally exclaimed Montalva), when the abbess repeated to him the answer of Isabel.

"'Tis well, madam (cried he). This obstinacy, I own I did not expect; but as Isabel rejects the peaceful, and happy lot, which her parents have chosen for her, she must abide the consequences. In two days I depart, and she must accompany me."

"Nay, signor (cried the lady abbess), let me at least plead for a little delay."

"It is impossible to grant it, madam (replied Montalva), my orders are most strict, and Isabel shall not in every instance disobey the will of her parents."

The abbess did not venture to remonstrate, though her heart swelled at what

she considered the most tyrannical injustice. "Isabel shall know your will, signor (replied she coldly), and I doubt not of her obedience."

Montalva now departed, and the abbess prepared to undertake the ungrateful task of announcing to Isabel her approaching departure. "Good Heavens! (thought the mother of St. Teresa,) what cruelty and injustice, to tear thee, my poor child, from the happiest lot, and consign thee to one so full of misery. Shame on the weak, the guilty being, who would thus hide her fault at the expence of thy peace." While she was lost in rumination, Isabel entered. "Well, dearest mother (cried she), I heard the signor had just left you, and I felt most anxious to know what he says to the determination which I have made."

My tidings are unpleasing ones, my beloved Isabel (said the abbess, tenderly), but it is the lot of humanity to

suffer; and blessed are those who bear their sufferings with patience, a bright unfading reward awaits them."

"I understand your kind caution (cried Isabel, turning pale), you have something to say that will, you think, afflict me, and you wish to prepare me for it by degrees, but fear not my fortitude, dear and venerable friend, your child will not disgrace those instructions you have deigned to bestow upon her."

"You recollect my child (said the abbess), the declaration of Signor Valdorno, that if you refused the veil, you were to accompany him; I grieve to say that he is about immediately to depart, and ——."

"I must be torn from the dear abode of my infancy (cried Isabel), this is a blow, indeed. Oh! my more than mother, must I then leave you, never, never, perhaps, to see you again?"

For a moment, the boasted fortitude

of Isabel gave way to grief, and she burst into tears.

"Hear me Isabel (said the abbess); was there a hope, that from your parents you would find that affection of which you are most worthy, was there a chance that your repugnance to a monastic life would induce them to allow you the liberty of returning to the world, I, would not seek to alter your determination; but alas! my love, of this event there is not the smallest hope; their pride condemns you to obscurity, that the secret of your birth may never transpire, and destined as you are to a life of retirement, where you will be so fondly sheltered, as here? where your infancy was matured, and where your virtues are known; could you, my child, but resolve to remain with us——."

"Oh! no (interrupted Isabel); let me at least preserve my innocence. Oh! what punishments might I not expect if, kneeling at the throne of grace, I presumed to offer wholly to the Al-

mighty, that heart in which, alas! one of . . is creatures has but too great a share; it is the first time that my secret has passed my lips (continued she, with firmness), and from henceforth it must be buried in my heart; but, oh! dearest mother, that heart has long, though unconsciously, been Sforza's; I know that I never can be his, but at least the remembrance of his affection, the delight of contemplating his virtues, may be mine; his image will follow me in solitude and obscurity, and shed a gleam of comfort over my cheerless days."

The countenance of Isabel, as she spoke, was lighted up with all the enthusiasm of pure affection, and never in the eyes of the abbess, did she appear so lovely.

"My child, my Isabel (cried she), I will not farther seek to combat your resolution; in two days I must lose you, and may the Virgin protect and guard you."

"We must not (said Isabel), 'till I actually have left the convent, let Signora Sforza, know what has passed; to see her would add fresh pangs to those which I suffer; when I am gone, you, dear mother, will——." She paused, but the abbess understood her.

"Yes (replied she), the signora and Alberto shall then know all."

On the second morning Montalva came at an early hour to take Isabel from the convent; bitter were the tears which she shed in the bosom of the lady abbess, whose sorrow equalled her own; the whole sisterhood indeed deeply regretted her departure, and with an almost breaking heart she left the scene of all her infant pleasures. Montalva handed her into a carriage, which waited to receive them, and for some hours they travelled in silence; it was at last broken by Isabel.

"May I hope to see my mother,

when we reach our journey's end, signor?" (timidly enquired she).

"No, not immediately (replied Montalva), but probably soon."

"After so long supposing myself an orphan (cried Isabel), I feel most anxious to be clasped, if but for a moment, to the bosom of a parent; perhaps my father would deign to see his child?"

"Perhaps he may" (said Montalva, hesitatingly), and the idea which at the moment crossed his mind, how soon, through his means, the innocent Isabel would be sent to join her murdered parent, blanched the crimson of his cheek, and gave to his countenance an expression of horror, which Isabel, absorbed in her own thoughts, did not notice.

A large mansion, situate at some distance from Naples, and which was a part of the small hereditary possessions of Montalva, would, he thought, be a place well suited to his cruel purpose.

Montalva's bride had hitherto prevented him from parting with this half-ruined edifice; and he now rejoiced that it was still in his possession. One old domestic only resided there, and of him the count thought there would be no necessity to make a confidant. When they stopped for the night, he told Isabel, that they were going to a castle which belonged to a friend of her father's, and where her parent would probably soon join them; but for fear of any possibility of discovery, she must consent to appear in a masculine habit.

"The lovely face of Isabel was dyed with blushes at this proposal; but as she supposed it was her father's wish, she did not venture to express any reluctance; she longed to reach the end of her journey, for though Montalva laboured to appear at ease, yet the manner in which he sometimes fixed his eyes upon her, gave a sensation of fear to the heart of Isabel, to which it had till now been a stranger. When

hey reached the castle, Isabel shuddered at its gloomy and ruinous appearance; and in the welcome which Montalva gave her, there was something that chilled her blood; she strove to appear calm, but her agitation was evident to the count: nor was his, though from a different cause, much inferior. Determined as he was to sacrifice her, he almost forgot his purpose, when he gazed upon her as she sat at supper; she may yet be saved, thought he; I will make one effort to induce her to take the veil."

"I regret, signora (said he, endeavouring to assume an insinuating accent), the destiny which you are preparing for yourself."

"Know you what my fate will be, signor?" (cried Isabel).

"Yes (answered he), perpetual imprisonment."

Isabel turned pale.

"I wonder not, (cried Montalva), that you should be shocked at such a

ot; 'tis indeed a dreary one, but it is your father's positive determination. 'Tell her (cried he, to me), that no chance shall ever publish to the world, a secret on which the peace and honour, nay, more, the life of her mother depends; if she selfishly prefers the indulgence of her own wishes to the duty that she owes her parents, they have at least, the power to punish her obstinacy; in a convent she may, if it be not her own fault, be happy; but should she reject a life, to which she was destined, even before her birth, should she presumptuously insist in mixing with that world, which she is doomed never to enter, perpetual and solitary imprisonment will be her portion. Tell her this, Valdorno, and should she then refuse, what, as a father, I have a right to demand, her fate be upon her own head'."

"'Tis well, signor (cried Isabel, whose spirit, though the meekest under Heaven, was roused by this injurious

eatment), I have at least to thank
y parents for tranquillizing my mind.
1 one respect, they are indeed the ar-
ters of my destiny, and that fate to
hich they destine me, I must bear;
at their conduct absolves me from all
nty to them, from all regret at disap-
ointing their views."

"Ha! (thought Montalva), thou
ost indeed inherit the haughty spirit
D'Rosonio; should I ever be in thy
ower—my fate is sure. In thy power!
leavens! can I bear the thought! no,
y obstinacy is the cause of all, I do
ot seek thy life, thou forcest me to
ake it."

While these reflections were pas-
ng in his mind, his countenance
ssumed an appearance of desperate re-
olution that startled Isabel; and her
error increased, when, on catching her
ye, he tried to smile. "Good Hea-
ens! (said she, mentally) into what
ands am I fallen; but surely I can
ave no cause for fear—is he not my

father's friend?" yet, her heart sunk as she surveyed the stern countenance of the count, and she expressed a wish to retire; Montalva did not attempt to detain her, but as he bade her "good night;" the expression of his voice and countenance, froze her innocent heart with horror.

CHAP. XI.

THE old domestic attended to light her to her chamber, and as soon as they reached it, she dismissed him, and gave vent to her feelings in a burst of tears; when she had a little relieved her full heart, she strove to tranquillize her mind, but in vain. Her apartment was large, and its gloomy magnificence, added to the depression of her spirits. She approached the bed which seemed not to have been slept in for years; at this moment Isabel regretted the choice that she had made.

"Ah! (thought she), did my dear abbess know the lot to which I am destined, how would her heart bleed for her Isabel. Oh! that I had been allowed to remain with her, but the terms on which such a boon would have been granted, I could not, I dared not accept them. Oh! Alberto, how could I offer to my God, a heart that thou wouldst share with him? No, let me not wish that I had purchased a secure asylum, at the expence of everlasting remorse; whatever may be my destiny, at least, the consciousness of guilt shall not be added to my sufferings."

She now prepared to undress, but the dampness of the bed prevented her; a thousand vague apprehensions filled her mind; but determining to subdue them, she threw herself on her knees, and poured out her whole soul in prayer to Heaven; nor were her prayers vain: she arose from her devotions, with a mind more tranquil, and spirits soothed, by a reliance on the justice, as well as

the mercy of that Almighty Being, at whose nod creation trembles; yet, whose loving kindness is extended even to the meanest of his creatures.

Isabel loosened the collar of her shirt, and wrapping her cloak around her, she sought repose for sometime in vain; at length, fatigue overcame her disinclination to sleep, and she sunk into a sound and tranquil slumber.

When she had retired, Montalva again reviewed his situation, and again, did the declaration of the minstrel steel his heart against the hapless Isabel. The chamber to which, by his orders, she had been conducted, had, as he well knew, a trap-door that led to vaults beneath the castle; these vaults were known only to himself, and in them he proposed to deposit the body of Isabel. When he thought she was lost in sleep, he proceeded to her chamber; the door, as he expected, was fastened; but he knew of another in the arras, which was not easily discovered; through this, he

entered. When he approached his distined victim, her repose was calm as the sleep of infants; the cloak in which she had wrapt herself had fallen aside, and discovered her lovely neck and bosom, which was partly exposed; Montalva's hand was on his dagger, but his arm was nerveless.

"Fool, coward, that I am!" (cried he,) shall I spare this girl, 'till I myself perish? no, never shall public disgrace overtake Montalva," he approached her, but in vain essayed to strike. "What madness (said he, mentally, and averting his eyes from Isabel) to suffer this weakness to unman me!" she made a slight movement; a low, and inarticulate sound escaped her lips, and a blush suffused her ingenuous and lovely countenance. Spite of himself, Montalva gazed upon her; and to his surprise, he traced in her features a strong resemblance to Valeria D'Branzo. The thought of her, again suspended his purpose; when the minstrel's mirror,

and the objects it presented, darted into his mind. "There is but one way," (thought he), and his dagger was pointed at the bosom of Isabel; but what was the astonishment, the horror of the count, when the form of Valeria, bending over the sleeping Isabel, was distinctly visible to him!

"Wretched Montalva, to what unutterable woe would the murder of Isabel have consigned thee! She is thy own daughter."

Too well did the count recollect in the low and hollow accents of the ærial form, on which he gazed in mute horror, the sweet voice of the betrayed Valeria; and with a groan of agony, he sunk senseless on the floor; his fall awakened Isabel, and her screams brought the old domestic to the chamber. Long did they vainly endeavour to recover the wretched count; at length, he opened his eyes, which he fixed upon Isabel with a convulsive shudder.

"Where is she" (said he, after a long pause). "I am here, signor" (said Isabel).

"I mean thy mother. Knowest thou not that she has burst the confines of the tomb, to save thee from perishing by a father's hand," groaned out Montalva.

"Alas! his senses wander" (said Isabel), for to her the spectre had not been visible.

"I tell thee, I would have murdered thee; yes, though thou art my child" (cried Montalva).

"There is a convent near us, the fathers are skilled in medicine" (said Lopez).

"Fly then for one" (said Isabel), yet, the next moment she was terrified at the idea of remaining alone with Montalva.

"His purpose here was surely an evil one" (thought she), and she called back Lopez, but he was already gone. The count sunk into a state of stupor,

and when the domestic returned with one of the holy fathers, he was apparently calm. The monk questioned Isabel as to the cause of the count's illness, but her account gave no clue to it. In mild accents, father Francisco addressed the unhappy Montalva, but his reason had fled, and the wildest ravings, burst from his lips; yet from them the father could conjecture a part of the truth. For two nights, did the good Francisco watch by the bed-side of the wretched count: reason at length resumed her sway, and he hastened to make a full confession of his crimes; but the hope of expiating them by penitence, was denied him; he had scarcely owned his guilt, when he again lost his senses. Many were the expiring sinners by whom Francisco had watched and prayed, but never did he witness a death-bed scene so full of horror: dreadful indeed were the agonies in which Montalva expired.

"Almighty power! thy unerring

arm, though slow, is ever sure to punish (said father Francisco, as he vainly presented the symbol of his faith to the expiring count). Oh! could the wretched children of avarice and ambition behold this scene, could they witness the torture which rack the bosom of this unhappy and guilty man, how would they shrink appalled from the commission of crimes like his!"

Isabel, at the desire of the father, had forborne to approach the chamber of Montalva; but when all was over, the good friar revealed to her the secret of her birth; and he now informed her, that as Montalva had no other heir, she was intitled to the castle and domains of the murdered count D'Rosonio.

"Ah! never, never (exclaimed Isabel), I will return to the convent of St. Teresa; there I shall find an asylum; but never will I call the inheritance purchased by blood mine."

"On this point, my child (said the

father), thy conscience must decide; nor will I urge thee; but calm thy spirits, lady Isabel, the crime of Montalva attaches not to thee; in the sight of Heaven, thou art guiltless."

"Oh! holy father (cried the weeping Isabel), can the child of a murderer hope for peace?"

"Be not more severe to thyself, than Heaven is to thee (exclaimed the friar). I again repeat, that in its eye thou art guiltless; and in the duties of religion, in the consolations of friendship, thy innocent mind will soon be soothed to peace."

"Peace! (thought Isabel) Ah! can I hope for peace, when Alberto is for ever lost to me? No prospect, however distant, of our union now remains; for never, never can I become his."

The good friar procured for Isabel a conveyance, and a trusty escort to the convent of St. Teresa. The young orphan was formed to attract regard; she had made her way to the heart of

Father Francisco, and the benediction which he gave her on parting, was truly paternal. "Do not dismiss Fabricio, till you have reached the convent, my child (said the good father), and let me know by letter how you have borne the journey."

Isabel promised to comply with the father's injunction, and again did he recommend her to the protection of the Virgin, as he placed her in the vehicle that waited to convey her to the convent.

Isabel (or rather Valeria), for so she had been named by her unfortunate mother), travelled without stopping, until she reached the abode of her infancy: great indeed was the joy of the lady abbess at once more clasping her favourite in her arms.

"My child, my Isabel (cried she), by what miracle art thou restored to me?"

"By a miracle, indeed (said Valeria, as she returned the abbess's embrace). Oh! dearest mother, but for the pecu-

liar interposition of Heaven, never would you have beheld your Isabel again; but I will tell thee all."

"Not now, my child (said the mother of St. Teresa); thou needest rest and refreshment, to-morrow we will converse more calmly."

The whole sisterhood rejoiced in the return of Valeria; and when the next day she told the lady abbess by what awful means her life had been preserved, that kind friend joined her in thanks and praises to that divine power who would not suffer innocence to perish.

The abbess highly approved of her resolution not to appropriate to her own use any part of the estate of D'Rosonio.

"The soul of Alberto (cried she), is, I well know, far above the consideration of fortune; he seeks thy hand alone."

"My dearest mother (cried Valeria), on this subject spare me; never, even should the signora herself wish it, never

can I become the wife of Sforza. What! loaded as I am with ignominy, think you that I would stain the honour of Alberto, by an alliance with a nameless wretch, the child of guilt and shame? No, I will at least be just, nor take advantage of a lover's weakness to render him for ever miserable."

Vainly did the abbess try to combat the resolution of her beloved Valeria; but hard indeed did she find it to resist the tears and entreaties of Signora Sforza. When the abbess made known her departure, the grief of Alberto knew no bounds; he sunk into a degree of melancholy and despondence, that alarmed his mother for his intellects: and no sooner did she hear that Valeria was returned, than she flew to the convent. The abbess had besought her not to inform Alberto of the arrival of Valeria, and when the signora reached the convent, the mother of St. Teresa went herself to receive her.

"Oh! my dear friend, how great is my happiness (said the signora), but

say, is our dear child indeed restored to us? are all the obstacles that opposed her union with my son, removed?"

The abbess's account considerably damped the joy of the signora. "Yet, (cried she), I will not despair; surely this dear child will never persevere in her cruel resolution, when she is convinced that the peace, perhaps the life of Alberto, depend upon her compliance with our wishes."

But the arguments, nay, even the tears of the signora were vain. "You rend my heart, oh! my more than mother (cried she), but my resolution is not to be shaken."

This was an answer that Alberto would not take. "I will see her (cried he), I will hear from her own lips the sentence of my life or death. What! shall that angel, whose mind is the seat of purity and truth, and in whose heart every virtue finds a place; shall she reproach herself for guilt in which she had no share? No, dearest Isabel,

the voice of thy Alberto shall sooth thy spirit to peace and compliance."

Fearful of her own weakness, Valeria refused to see Sforza. "She cannot (cried he), interdict my writing; surely she does not know, she does not conceive what I suffer; I have deceived myself, she never loved me."

"Be not unjust, my son, (said his mother), the noblest motives actuate this charming and disinterested girl; nor is her heart less a sufferer I am convinced than your's; believe me, I regret her resolution not less than you do; but I respect her motives, and I know well what a perseverance in them must cost her."

That day, Alberto sent her the following letter:—

"In what words can I beseech my adored Isabel (for by that name only does my heart acknowledge you), to grant me at least a hearing? my mother, my dear mother, tells me, that her prayers and tears have been un-

availing; and can I expect that my influence will prevail, where her's has failed? yet, to resign that hope, which is the charm of my existence; that prospect which alone enables me to live. Oh, Isabel! do not require from your Alberto such a sacrifice.

"Suffer me to picture to you, beloved of my heart, what must be the consequences of your persisting in the cruel resolution which you have formed. Yes, Isabel, I must call it a cruel one; think you behold my mother, whose heart is known to you, sinking into old age, and surrounded, perhaps, by the children of my sisters, but languishing to add to the little groupe, those of her Alberto; and reflecting with bitterness, that no hopes of such a blessing remains, and that the name of Sforza must perish. You love my mother, can you consent then to plant a perpetual thorn in her breast? for you well know that my happiness would constitute hers. You have owned that

I am not indifferent to you; and yet to what a dreary fate would you consign me; for it is my resolution, should you persist in refusing me your hand, never to marry: you possess, and will always possess my whole heart, and no other woman shall ever have my hand.

"I am sensible that the scenes through which you have lately passed, must have shocked your gentle nature; but, my Isabel, say only that you will at last be mine, and I will patiently wait your own time. I will not, I cannot believe that my beloved can persist in a resolution which will destroy the peace of those whom she tenderly regards. More, much more could I say on this subject, but I cannot be satisfied without an assurance that you will suffer me to see you; one interview is all I ask, and that you will not, you cannot deny me. Oh, Isabel! think for a moment, that the happiness or misery of my life hangs upon your

decision. Ah! need I say more to influence that best, and most gentle of human hearts in favour of

"ALBERTO SFORZA."

Laura, the beloved friend of Valeria's youthful days, was the bearer of this letter, and the lady abbess was present when Valeria received it.

"Oh! my mother (cried Valeria), guide and support your poor child; I cannot, I dare not become the wife of Sforza."

"Hear me Valeria (replied the abbess), there is a middle way, and one that I think you ought to pursue. Alberto has declared that he will wait your own time; should his love stand the test of absence, you may, you must be assured, that by refusing to become his, you will eventually render him miserable. Dearly as the signora loves her son, she would, I am sure, consent to his travelling for one year;

and if at the end of that period his constancy remained unshaken, you would then owe it to the purity and constancy of his affection. Shake off the prejudice which at present presents your blessing him with your hand, and do not, my Valeria, suppose, that that Providence which has so miraculously preserved you, would be pleased with your devoting your future days to misery; for well do I know what your heart would suffer, if you gave up Sforza."

Laura joined her entreaties to those of the abbess; and at length Valeria consented to see Alberto. "I will try every argument to induce him to agree to our separation (said she), and should all fail, should I find that my entreaties are unavailing, I will then submit to him your proposal, but not for one year, that is surely too short a period."

The next day, Alberto was allowed to see her, and his entreaties, his solemn declaration, that on her, and her only,

the future happiness of his life depended, wrung from Valeria a reluctant consent to become his, if, at the expiration of a year, he continued to desire it.

Scarcely did the enraptured Alberto allow her time to finish the sentence, which was to him the mandate of future bliss; the violence of his transports almost frightened the timid Valeria; but when he left her, when she found herself clasped in the arms of his mother, when Laura on one side, and the abbess on the other, congratulated her with tears of joy, her heart found relief in weeping; and she endeavoured to persuade herself, that she ought to be happy: yet, still the circumstances of her birth hung upon her spirits, and she shuddered while she thought of the crimes of that man, to whom she owed her being. Every pains was taken by her kind and attentive friends, to chace from her mind these melancholy reflections; and Alberto resolved to un-

dertake a journey to the castle of D'Rosonio, to discover, if possible, by what means Valeria had been exchanged for the heiress of the count. The heart of Valeria felt this proof of her lover's attention; and he departed, after a thousand charges from her, to be careful of his health and safety.

CHAP. XII.

ALBERTO was charged by his Valeria with a letter to the good Father Francisco, whose convent was in his way to D'Rosonio. The father rejoiced at the intelligence which Alberto brought of the health and safety of Valeria, in whose fate he took the warmest interest. He pressed Alberto to stop for a few days at his convent, and the youth complied with his request. From Francisco, Sforza had a detail of the agonies which the wretched Montalva had suffered, and he joined the father in lamenting the suddenness of his fate.

"Yet, who (said the pious and tolerant Francisco), shall dare to limit the mercies of the Most High? and in the sight of Heaven, how know we that the unhappy count's pangs have not expiated the enormity of his guilt! My profession renders me acquainted with the depravity of the human heart, and many are the death-bed scenes which I have witnessed; but I hope to be spared the sight of such a one again; for never, never did I view such horrors."

That night the father was sent for to a lady, who had been a benefactress to the convent, and who was suddenly seized with an illness that threatened to be fatal. It was late when he returned. "I have been witnessing a scene different to the one we spoke of yesterday (said he to Sforza). I have seen a woman meet death with the resignation of a saint, and the courage of a martyr. Poor Viola! one error, one single error, clouded thy life with woe;

but years of penitence have long since expiated it, and thou art now gone 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest'."

The deceased penitent, was indeed the Viola, whom Anselmo had seduced. When, instigated by her attendant, she had thrown herself upon the generosity of his aunt, the signora, she did it not from a spirit of revenge, but a hope that the signora, whose benevolence was the theme of universal praise, would influence her nephew to do her justice. She totally concealed the pecuniary transactions between them, from a generous wish not to lessen Anselmo more than she could help in the eyes of the signora; and when she found that he steadily refused to marry her, and that his aunt, in consequence, cast him from her affection, she bitterly regretted what she had done. With tears did she supplicate the signora to pardon him, but that lady would not listen to her.

" He knows the conditions on which alone he can hope for pardon (cried she), and surely they are easy ones; if he will not comply with them, let him embrace the beggary he deserves."

Had Viola possessed the means, her faithless lover would have been amply supplied; but the signora, who feared that some step of that kind might be taken by the generous girl, though liberal to her in every other way, dispensed her pecuniary favours with a sparing hand. When the signora learned that Anselmo had entered the service of Montalva, as his secretary, she hoped that a station so inferior to what he had been born to expect, would soon grow irksome, and that he would gladly accept her offered pardon, and give his hand to Viola; but these hopes were destroyed by his death. He had been highly beloved, and he was deeply regretted by his aunt; but from the moment that she learned the intelligence of his fate, all hope of happiness

fled from Viola. The signora declared her heiress to her large fortune; but riches could not heal the wounds of disappointed love, and though outwardly composed, she was internally miserable.

The interest which her patroness made amongst the great, procured the pardon of her uncle; and she enjoyed the pleasure of being again clasped to the bosom of her kind and indulgent aunt. The Jew, who feared that he might be punished for his villainy, fled from Naples; and the Signora Villoni remained ignorant of the events that had taken place during her absence.

In a few years, Viola lost her benefactress, who bequeathed to her the whole of her fortune; and never was money appropriated to a nobler purpose. Viola was indeed charity personified; her heart and her purse were alike open to the children of distress; and from that time till the close of her meritorious life, her only pleasure con-

sisted in the exercises of benevolence and religion. Her beauty and her fortune procured her many lovers; but never did she lose the remembrance of Anselmo, and no entreaties could prevail upon her to enter the bands of Hymen.

To the good Francisco, who had been for years her spiritual director, every secret of her soul was known and he encouraged her to hope a pardon for the only sin that had ever stained her life,—a sin that had been so truly expiated. She fell a martyr to her humanity; a servant who had lived with her for years, caught a pestilential distemper, and the benevolent Viola would attend upon her herself.

"My life is in the hands of God (said she, when her friends dissuaded her from doing so), and to his will I am resigned; but I should reproach myself for ever, if, through a fear of danger, I shrunk from what I think is a positive duty."

She caught the distemper, which at first wore a favourable appearance; but by a sudden turn it became mortal. Father Francisco was sent for, and in the most mild and parental manner, he apprized her of her approaching fate. She heard him with calmness. "The will of Heaven be done (cried she), I have but one wish, and that is, that you would not leave me, holy father, till all his over." The friar promised that he would not, and a few hours released Viola from a life of suffering for one of everlasting joy and peace.

Her death cast a gloom over the spirits of the good father, and Alberto staid with him a few days longer than he had intended. Every hour made the signor and the father more pleased with each other, and Alberto was surprised to find that Francisco possessed talents which his modesty had hitherto obscured, and a knowledge of the world that appeared wonderful in the inhabitant of a cloister; on his expressing

some curiosity to know the events of the monk's life, Francisco replied, "Mine, my son, is a simple tale; yet it will serve to show thee that even virtue may be carried to excess; and as it will beguile a tedious hour I will relate it.

The Friar's Story.

"Thou art right, my son, in supposing that I was not originally intended for an inhabitant of a cloister. I am descended from one of the noblest families in Italy; and possessed of an almost princely fortune, I aspired to the highest dignities of the state; and ambition left, as I fancied, no room in my heart for any softer passion.

"The family of Bernini solicited my alliance, and as theirs was reckoned the most powerful at Rome, I readily entered into a treaty of marriage with a daughter of the Count Vincentio Bernini. Of the mind of Corinna I knew

nothing, but I saw that her person was charming, and her talents and graces were the admiration of all Rome; yet, lovely as she was, I viewed her only as a creature who might be a means of increasing that power and popularity which I sighed to obtain, and I gave her my hand without the least sensation of tenderness for her.

"The temper of Corinna was, unhappily for us both, strongly tinctured with romance, and her views in marriage were widely different from mine; in short, she loved me; she was not blind to my indifference, but she hoped in time to subdue it, and she gave me her hand with a heart full of hopes that were destined, alas! never to be realized.

"Of what materials my heart was composed I cannot define; but neither the beauty nor the tenderness of my wife; neither the cheerfulness with which she bore my neglect, nor the pains she took to contribute to my happiness, not even the birth of a son, could make any

impression upon it; I treated her with cold respect, but nothing more.

"The time, however, was approaching, when the phantom, ambition, that had hitherto dazzled and misled me, was about to lose its influence over my mind; but, alas! I was destined to exchange it for a passion that afterwards became the torment of my life.

"I grew disgusted at the treatment which I met with at court, and I retired for a short period to a beautiful villa at a little distance from Rome; thither Corinna accompanied me, and, for the first time, I began to taste of pleasure in the society of my wife, and to feel a father's tenderness warm my breast, as I caressed my infant son. Delighted at the change in my conduct, my wife exerted all her powers to gain my heart, and never surely did nature bestow on a creature so many rare gifts. I was amused and grateful; but yet, I was not more than grateful.

"One day that I had strolled to some

distance from the villa, I was alarmed with the groans of one in pain; I looked around, and espied amongst the trees, a young female seated on the grass. She was chafing her leg, which was naked, and of uncommon beauty, and the expression of her countenance, while she did so, convinced me that she was suffering violent pain. At my approach, she hastily covered her leg and foot. I enquired whether she had hurt herself, and she replied, that she feared she had sprained her ancle. On attempting to rise, this opinion was confirmed, for she sunk upon the grass unable to stand. I learned that she lived in a cottage at a little distance, and I offered to carry her thither. This offer she at first refused but at last, she was persuaded to accept of it, and I raised her in my arms. Fearful of falling, she threw her arm round me, but the next moment she withdrew it, and with a countenance covered with blushes, she said she feared that her weight was too much for *me to support.* How strange, how in-

consistent is the human heart! I had beheld the loveliest women of Rome with indifference; yet, in one moment, this girl, who possessed, perhaps, in the eyes of a connoisseur, but few claims to beauty, inspired me with the most ardent passion.

"A few minutes brought us to Lauretta's cottage, and I was then reluctantly obliged to relinquish my lovely burthen. Her mother and herself loaded me with acknowledgments; and the simple, but touching manner of Lauretta, appeared to me all grace and eloquence. I returned to the villa without making known my rank to these rustics. On entering my house, I was met by my wife.

"I have just received that music, my dear lord (said she), which you wished so much for the other day; shall I now play to you?"

"I answered 'yes,' without, in fact, knowing what I said; and I mechanically followed her into the saloon.

Music was always a favourite pursuit of mine, and Corinna's proficiency in the science was admired and acknowledged by the best judges. Struck by my absent and disturbed air, she tenderly inquired whether I was unwell. The question roused me from my reverie, and I replied in the affirmative, at the same time saying I would try the effect of a little rest.

"When I was alone, I reflected with wonder on the strange infatuation which had overcome my reason; but unused to combat my inclinations, I determined to possess myself of an object that appeared necessary to my peace. I did not for a moment reflect upon the injury which I meditated doing to this innocent girl; I thought only that the riches which I had it in my power to bestow, would be a sufficient compensation for her innocence. 'Heaven has, I hope (cried he, raising his eyes to it), pardoned me for so base a thought.' As I wished to possess my-

self of the heart, as well as the person of Lauretta, I resolved for some time to conceal from her who I was, and the next day I repeated my visit to her cottage. I need not dwell upon this part of my story. Day after day did my heart imbibe fresh poison from the soft blue eyes of the artless Lauretta; and I could soon see that I was not indifferent to her.

My rank still remained a secret. 'Now (thought I) is the time to dazzle her imagination with visions of splendour, of which she has not yet conceived an idea. Love and ambition united, must surely be too strong for the virtue of a girl, whose whole life has been spent in a cottage.' But I little knew the purity of the angel, whose mind I wished to contaminate.

"I always thought, my lord (said she, when I disclosed to her who I really was), that your rank in life must be much superior to my own, though I knew not how much, but believe me

your whole fortune could not purchase either the heart or the person of Laurettá; from this moment, my lord, we meet no more.'

"Nearly distracted at a resolution which I had not foreseen, I tried every means to make her revoke it, but in vain; and finding that neither tears nor intreaties had the power to change her purpose, I became a prey to gloom and melancholy.

"The alteration in my manners did not fail to strike my wife with equal grief and surprise; but she carefully concealed her thoughts, and not a word, not a look, upbraided me for a conduct that rent her gentle heart: our infant now became her only pleasure, and in caressing, and I fear weeping over him, she spent most of her time; but of this happiness it was the will of Heaven to deprive her. Our son was seized with a disorder which is often fatal to infants: his mother never left his bed-side, and during twenty days successively, she

wearied Heaven with prayers for his recovery, but in vain; on the twentieth day he expired, and so great was the grief of Corinna, that I thought she would have followed him to the grave.

"Her youth and naturally good constitution prevailed, at length, over the violence of her disorder, and she slowly recovered; but in losing her son, she had lost all that could render life desirable to her. The hope of touching, and at length subduing my heart was vanished, and my poor Corinna found herself an isolated and unhappy being, though surrounded by every thing that in the eye of the world constituted felicity. Some time after the death of my son, I resolved on making a last effort to subdue the resolution of Lauretta, and I wrote to her. This letter I intrusted to the care of, as I imagined, a faithful servant: in it I painted in the most glowing colours, the violence of my love and my despair; I made use of all the sophistry in which I was then but too conversant, to prevail on her to

sacrifice what I called her prejudices to my happiness; and I solemnly vowed that without she did so, I would not answer for the extremes to which disappointment and despair might drive me.

"To this rhapsody Lauretta did not deign to return an answer, but as my evil genius would have it, the domestic on whose fidelity I thought I could depend, betrayed my secret to my wife. She read my letter to Lauretta, need I say that it pierced her heart with a thousand daggers? She charged the servant, as I afterwards learned, to bring her the answer to it; and when she found that there was none, she expressed a strong curiosity to see Lauretta; this curiosity she found means to gratify, and she formed the strangest resolution that ever perhaps entered into the head of woman.

"She expressed a wish to visit a convent at some distance from Rome, and as her absence was rather a relief than

otherwise to me, I did not oppose her desire; she set out on her journey, attended by a proper retinue, whom she dismissed when she reached the convent. The time fixed upon for her return had nearly elapsed when I received from her this letter. The friar presented one to Alberto, who read as follows.

LETTER.

"For the first time perhaps Fernando, any thing that comes from me will be welcome to you; yes, I am at last aware of the cause that has converted indifference into disgust, and I am sensible that all hope, all possibility of my gaining your heart is for ever at an end.

"Was the object of your passion a licentious woman, did she willingly resign herself to your unhallowed desires, I might think, satiated by time and possession, you might at last return to me with a heart more sensible than your's has yet been of my love for you; but

the native purity and nobleness of this young creature's mind, will never suffer her to become your mistress; and tormented by a passion which you can neither gratify nor forget, your future days present the most gloomy prospect.

"Fernando this *shall* not be; to what purpose should I suffer you to drag a chain the most galling? Life has not for me a single charm; my infant, for whom alone I wished to live, is gone to the abode of bliss and peace; my husband's heart is for ever alienated from me, alienated did I say, alas! I never possessed it; we are a strong proof how truly involuntary is the passion of love. Caressed, flattered, and admired from my childish days, by parents and relations who doated upon me, and accustomed as I grew up to the voice of adulation wherever I turned my steps, I rashly married you in the hope, or rather certainty, that a very short time would render your affection equal to

my own; if I know my own heart, this idea sprung not from vanity, but love; it was however erroneous; and severely, oh! Heaven only knows how severely, have I been punished for ever entertaining it.

"When I quitted you to visit the convent of St. Sebastiano, it was my fixed purpose never to return; you shall at least be freed from the sight of a being, who I am convinced is odious to you: I shall be henceforth dead to the world, for to the gloomy duties of a monastic life will I devote my future days; make what use of my doing so you please; a rumour of my death will never be contradicted; and should you lead to the altar another and a happier bride, never shall her felicity be disturbed by the unfortunate Corinna.

"You will, I know, think more highly of this sacrifice than it merits. Believe, me Fernando, in the solitude of a cloister, I shall be less miserable than in your splendid palace; I shall at least

have the comfort, in parting with you for ever, to reflect that you must at last be sensible how much, how tenderly you were beloved; I shall also know that the future happiness of your life will be my gift; and that the sacrifice which I have proved myself capable of making will entitle me to your gratitude; and oh! may that sacrifice be the means of bestowing upon you that felicity which is for ever lost to

"CORINNA."

"Generous, but extraordinary woman (cried Alberto, returning the letter), but proceed, father."

"You may suppose, my son (continued the friar), how much this letter astonished me. I lost no time in endeavouring to discover the retreat of Corinna, but in vain; all that I could learn was, that she had privately quitted the convent of St. Sebastiano; but whither she had bent her steps, none knew. I returned to Rome, and sought to lose the remembrance both of Corinna and

Lauretta in business, but in vain. The causes of disgust, which I had received, had ceased, but the reign of ambition was over, and its illusive splendours could not restore peace to my heart.

"I had given out that my wife was no more, but I was not yet wicked enough to think, without a pang, of giving my hand to another. The torments of my mind at length impaired my health, and by the advice of my physician, I returned to my villa.

"I will not, my son, repeat to you the false and sophistical arguments which I used to persuade myself that my wife had herself exonerated me from the nuptial vow. I forgot, or rather I endeavoured to forget, that no human power can sunder those whom Heaven has joined; in short, I determined to espouse Lauretta.

"My honourable proposals were received with equal modesty and gratitude. Lauretta became mine, and now said I to myself, at last I am happy. I ac-

knowledge the truth of that reproving glance, my son, I was indeed mistaken. Oh! who was ever otherwise, that thought happiness compatible with guilt.

"In one year after our marriage, Lauretta brought me a son, and the following year another; doatingly fond of my wife and children. I looked forward to those honours for my boys, which I despised for myself, but Heaven had decreed otherwise; both my children died within one month of each other.

"Lauretta yet remained, and in endeavouring to console her, I lost a part of my own affliction. Time in some degree calmed our sorrows, and for five years after the death of my children, I might, but for the visitations of conscience, have been happy.

"In the fifth year, I lost Lauretta, that being whom I adored, and for whose sake I had plunged into crimes, was suddenly snatched from me, without any previous indisposition: one hour,

saw her blooming in health and beauty, the next beheld her a lifeless corpse."

The friar's voice faultered, and his eyes filled with tears. After a few moments pause, he continued—" This event plunged me into affliction, but it produced a salutary effect upon my mind. I reviewed my conduct, and I acknowledged the justice of that unerring arm which tore from me the object of my sinful passion. The world now became hateful to me; I resigned my estates to my nearest of kin, and assumed the monastic habit.

" Slowly did peace again revisit my troubled soul; but penitence and prayer have at length, I trust, atoned for my sins; and I look forward in the humble hope of pardon. Some years after I had assumed the cowl, the confessor of a neighbouring convent being ill, I was sent for to supply his place among the penitents, who poured forth the secrets of their hearts at the foot of the confessional; one well-remembered voice

struck my ear, it was Corinna's. I cautiously made myself known to my injured wife, and besought her forgiveness for the sorrows I had occasioned her. I had the happiness to find that religion had enabled her to conquer those wild emotions which at first destroyed her peace. Severely did she blame herself for the misplaced generosity which induced her to leave me; and I learned the means by which she had discovered my perfidy. My generous Corinna would not allow of my self-accusations. 'Heaven (said she), in its own proper time, rewards and punishes its creatures; we have both been wrong, we have both from different causes suffered; let us then accept with joy the dawn of peace which Providence has blessed us with, as an earnest of its pardon.'

"From that time to the present, I have every day been easier in my mind. Our order is one of those few that are useful; and in works of mercy to my

fellow creatures, in the duties of religion, I have found that solid peace which sensual enjoyments can never bestow."

The friar ceased, and Alberto thanked him for his tale. His stay had already exceeded the time he proposed to devote to the good father, who, though he acknowledged the propriety of his going, yet parted from him with regret; he charged him with a benediction to Valeria, and he bade him adieu with the warmest wishes and prayers for his future happiness.

CHAP. XIII.

When Alberto reached the demesnes of D'Rosonio, he found, on enquiring amongst the domestics at the castle, that the woman who had nursed the supposed Isabel was still alive, and resided in a cottage at no great distance. Alberto soon reached it, and found her alone: he complained of fatigue, and Marcella, with rustic courtesy, brought out such refreshments as her cottage afforded, and begged the signor to rest and partake of them.

"I find (said Sforza) that there has been, within the last twelve years,

strange changes at the castle D'Rosonio."

"Ah! strange indeed, signor (cried Marcella), I did hope that the Lady Isabel would have supplied to the vassals the place of her good father, but Heaven was pleased to take the cherub to itself."

"Have you lived here long?" (asked Alberto).

"From my birth, signor (replied she). Ah! I shall never forget the time the countess died. How grieved the count was, and the little Isabel was sent to my poor cottage to nurse, because the sight of her reminded him so strongly of her mother."

"You were then the nurse of the count's heiress?" (said Sforza.)

"Yes, signor (said she), and had the Lady Isabel but lived, Marcella would not have been the inhabitant of this poor place. But thank the saints, I am content."

"What, though you have been

guilty of the grossest imposture;—tho' you have substituted the child of another person in the place of the heiress of D'Rosonio (said Alberto, sternly), yet you can be content?"

"Oh! holy Virgin (cried the astonished Marcella), how has it been discovered?"

"It is discovered; and the only way in which you can avoid the punishment that threatens you (said Alberto), is by a frank and open confession of the means you used to perpetrate the fraud."

"Pray, pray, signor (exclaimed the terrified Marcella, dropping on her knees), have mercy upon me, and I will tell you all; indeed, indeed, I will."

Alberto raised, and reassured the trembling criminal by a promise of pardon, if she was sincere, and she proceeded.

"For some time after the death of the countess, the count did not see his

child, who grew a lovely, healthy creature; but at last he visited the cottage, and never shall I forget how he looked when I presented to him the Lady Isabel; he turned his face from the child, and burst into tears; but speedily recovering himself, he took the infant in his arms. 'Poor innocent (said he), may Heaven bless thee; thou art unconscious what thou hast cost me'. He gazed on the babe for some time with earnestness, and from his melancholy looks, I thought that he was tracing in its little features a resemblance to its mother. He desired me to leave him; and when he called me, I could perceive that he had been weeping.

"'I will see your little charge soon again, my good Marcella' (said he to me, when he was about to depart), and so indeed he did; and in a short time he said that he intended to have us home to the castle. Well, signor, the very night that he had said so, my sister, who lived at a considerable distance

from me, came to see and pass some time with me; she brought with her a little nursling, a lovely baby, who had (she said) been intrusted to her care by its father, who did not, she believed, trouble himself about what became of it. 'But I love the little thing (cried Villetta), as much as if it were my own; and thanks to the Holy Mother, it is as fine a thriving child as any in the whole country.' I took the infant in my arms; it was a girl, and very beautiful. While I was caressing her, I heard my little Isabel moan, I flew to the cradle, but the dear baby had expired. At first I could not believe that she was dead, though her features were quite distorted; but I was soon convinced of it. I knew not what to do, for I feared the count would attribute her death to my neglect, and Heaven knows, signor (continued she), that that was not the case. While I was weeping over the lifeless infant, my sister proposed to me to substitute

her nursling in its place; for a long time I refused, but at last, the dread of the count's displeasure, and the knowledge that I injured no one, (for my sister said that she was sure the father of the child would be glad to hear that it was dead, which she meant to tell him), prevailed upon me to consent; and as the children were both so young, and the colour of their eyes alike, as well as some resemblance in their other features, the deception was never discovered; and the count was as fond of the little Valeria as if she had been his own. And now, signor (continued Marcella), I have told you all, and I hope that you will not punish me."

As her account appeared to Alberto too simple and unstudied to be false in any particular, he readily promised that she should not be punished. He had now obtained all the information he wanted, but he would not yet return to Valeria; I must give her gentle spirit time to recover from the horrors

that have oppressed it (thought he); and in my mother I shall, during my absence, have a warm and zealous friend. He was indeed right, the signora was most tenderly attentive to Valeria, who, in her soft soothings, and the natural kindness of the lady abbess began again to taste of peace: but happiness pure and unmixed is destined never to be the lot of humanity, and the heart of Valeria was yet, at times, torn by the remembrance of her father's crimes.

Signora Sforza had a female servant about her person, who had lived with her for years, and who was uncommonly attached to her; one day she sent this woman to her cabinet, where the portrait, whose resemblance to Valeria she had once noticed, was deposited. The case that contained it happened to be open; an exclamation of surprise from her servant occasioned the signora to enquire into the cause, and she learned that her woman knew

the signor for whom the portrait was taken.

"Poor Signora Bianca (continued she), it had been well both for her and the Signor Montalva if——."

"Was that portrait taken for Signor Montalva?" (interrupted the Signora Sforza).

"It was, indeed, lady (replied the woman). I was then in the service of Signora Bianca; but, perhaps, you know her story?"

The signora replied in the negative, and she related to her Signora Lupinetti's story.

"When, my lady (pursued she), found herself treated with disdain by Count D'Rosonio, I thought that the violence of her rage would have destroyed her love for him; but I was mistaken; she grew melancholy, and instead of conquering her passion, it daily increased. The Signor Montalva became odious to her. That portrait had been given her at her own desire;

and on receiving it, she had vowed never to part with it; and for a long time she wore it day and night suspended from her neck. One day when the Count D'Rosonio had, I believe, answered a letter that she sent him in a manner that displeased her, she took the portrait from her bosom.

"'Here (said she to me), hide this from my sight; would I had never seen it.' I did not presume to reply, but I placed the portrait in a casket that contained her jewels.

"For some time she continued a prey to melancholy, and at last she declared to me a resolution of retiring from the world, and ending her days in a convent. She quitted Naples, and I accompanied her to the monastery which she had fixed upon as her future residence. With tears did I see my beloved lady enter this gloomy abode, never more to leave it; but all places, she said, were now alike indifferent to

her. She generously recompensed my past services, and I returned to Naples, where I remained till I entered your service, signora."

The Signora Sforza was now convinced that the portrait was that of Valeria's father; but she kept the discovery to herself, as she rightly judged that a knowledge of it could not afford her young friend any pleasure.

The year was three parts gone when Alberto ventured to return. The joy that sparkled in the eyes of Valeria, assured him of that welcome which her faultering tongue almost refused to give him; and when the first congratulations were over, she was obliged to leave the room abruptly, in order to give vent to her tears.

The signora found her on her knees, in her own apartment, in fervent prayer. "Oh, my beloved mother! (cried she,) what transcendant happiness would be mine, did I but dare to enjoy the en-

viable lot that offers itself to me; but memory poisons the delightful hope of future bliss."

The signora raised and pressed her to her bosom. Every thing that maternal love could inspire, did she say to banish the apprehensions of the timid girl. "Never, my beloved Valeria (cried she), never will you be less dear than you are at present to our hearts. Cruel indeed must that being be that could attach reproach to innocence like yours."

At the earnest intreaty of the signora, Valeria quitted the convent for some time; and accompanied the family of Sforza to Naples. "A sight of that world which she has hitherto been prevented from mixing with, will be of use to her spirits (said the signora to the lady abbess); and the event proved that she was right. Valeria was amused, and her mind was diverted from brooding over its own cares. But though adulation followed her footsteps, yet

Valeria saw not amongst her numerous admirers any one that her partial fancy could compare to Sforza. Her spirits became gradually better, and that native vivacity, which had been one of her greatest charms, again sparkled in her eye, and wantoned in the dimples that played round her lovely mouth.

Laura Sforza, not less than Valeria, was admired by the youth of Naples. Less lovely, she was infinitely more attractive than her sister Julia, in whose bosom ambition only reigned; and to the wish of contracting a splendid alliance, she would willingly have sacrificed every prospect of domestic comfort. Don Juan De Santenos, a rich and noble Spaniard, but much advanced in life, and of a haughty and stern temper, was struck with the charms of the Signora Julia; and notwithstanding her mother's avowed disinclination to the match, Julia persisted in determining to give him her hand.

"As the wife of Don Juan (said

Signora Sforza), you will, my child, be possessed of rank and riches above your most sanguine expectations; but you will speedily find the insufficiency of either to procure happiness; that, in the married state, must spring from a similarity of temper and disposition, and from those unobtrusive virtues that teach us to bear with each others defects; but a moment's reflection will serve to show you how vain is every hope of that kind. Don Juan is stern and imperious, and his wife will find herself a slave, though surrounded by splendour and magnificence."

"I will own to you, my dearest mother (cried Julia), that a splendid alliance is necessary to my felicity. I was not formed for a domestic life; to shine and to dazzle are necessary to my happiness. As the wife of Don Juan, I shall enjoy all that I wish for; consent then, I beg of you, to the wish of your child."

Thus urged, the signora no longer

withheld her consent; but she gave it with a foreboding, that Julia would, ere long, repent the choice that she had made. The nuptials were solemnized with much splendour; and, soon after, Don Juan and his lady departed for Spain.

"I have been thinking of a plan, my Valeria (said Alberto, to his beloved), that will, I hope, be pleasing to you. You have a legal right to the demesnes of D'Rosonio; but I think with you, that the possession of them would not add to our happiness: yet, they might be so disposed of as to be a blessing to thousands."

"I think I comprehend you (said she), you mean to employ them in founding a monastery." "I did, indeed, think of such a plan (cried Alberto), but our convent, my love, should not be merely a house of prayer and meditation. For the mere recluse, I have, I must own, little respect; but those men who voluntarily resign the riches

and pleasures of the world in order to devote themselves to the service of Heaven, and of their fellow creatures, these are indeed to be venerated. The demesnes of D'Rosonio are amply sufficient to found a monastery on such a plan as to be a blessing to the neighbouring poor, not by encouraging them through its blind and lavish donations to live in idleness, but by relieving their real wants; by inciting them to industry, and gradually dispelling those mists of ignorance and error into which the lower orders are plunged: but it is not only to the hungry and the weary, but to the distressed and persecuted that our monastery would afford a refuge. Its gates should ever be open to suffering virtue or penitent vice; and could be benevolent spirit of D'Rosonio look down on the disposal of his property, it would, I am convinced, meet with his approbation."

"Oh! Alberto (cried she), how superior are you every way to the poor

Valeria! when I declared that I would renounce all right to the demesnes of D'Rosonio, I forgot of what a happiness I deprived myself—the power of doing good. Yes, dear Alberto, most cheerfully do I agree to a plan equally wise and benevolent; and oh! may the riches so dreadfully acquired, answer the pious and charitable purpose to which you intend to devote them."

Tears of painful recollection fell from the lovely eyes of Valeria; but the soothings of Alberto soon dried them. The twelvemonths had now expired, and the signora reminded Valeria of her promise. She pleaded for yet a little longer delay; and as Signora Sforza had reason to think that her daughter Laura would soon add another votary to the train of Hymen, she consented; and prevailed on Alberto to indulge Valeria.

"Think me not affected or capricious (said she to her lover), but indeed I feel most grateful to you for this indul-

gence; my mind is daily recovering its peace, but I would, if possible, be free from every unpleasant reflection when I bestow upon you my hand. You merit a whole and undivided heart, no cankering cares, no painful recollections, should poison the happiness of your bride."

"Nor shall they, my beloved (cried Alberto). To share your regrets, and to endeavour to chase them from your mind, will be at once my pleasure and my care; that good and pure mind has, in fact, no cause for painful recollections, but such as arises from its own susceptibility, and every day will diminish those."

Valeria proposed, and Alberto agreed to request the good Francisco to take upon himself the superintendance of their monastic plan; to which he readily consented. The spacious and noble castle of D'Rosonio, which had so long witnessed the pangs of unrepented villainy; was now appropriated to the

purposes of religion and charity. Money rendered the workmen employed in the necessary alterations expeditious; and it was soon fit for the reception of the monks. Father Francisco was their abbot, and well were the mild virtues of his character adapted to that sacred office. The monastery of St. Francis, as it was called, might indeed be termed of the order of mercy; for most truly did Father Francisco second the pious views of its founders; and while, with the mild benignity of a true christian, he comforted the dismayed and guilty penitent, the treasures of the convent were ever open to the distressed; and never did the poor or destitute turn from its gates unrelieved.

A short time justified the signora's suspicions, that the heart of Laura had played its misstress truant. Count D'Albertini, a young and amiable Neapolitan, solicited from her the hand of her daughter, and the blushing Laura owned, that if her mother consented,

she had no objection to the signor, who was——.

Laura could say no more, but her eyes spoke a language sufficiently intelligible to her fond mother, whose wishes coincided with her daughter's. The temper and disposition of Albertini was such as to give her every rational prospect of happiness, and most gratefully did the signora thank Heaven, for bestowing upon her children that felicity which would constitute hers also.

The abbot of St. Francis bestowed the nuptial benediction upon the two brides, who were both agitated, though from different causes. The natural timidity of Laura, and the reflection that she was about to quit a beloved mother, made the change peculiarly awful to her: Valeria, on the contrary, was to reside with the signora, whom she loved as a mother; and was it not for the single idea of her father's miserable fate, joy, the most pure and

unmixed would have been her portion.

The benevolent abbess of St. Teresa felt all the satisfaction of a parent at the happy lot of her beloved child, who ever treated her with filial affection; and, perhaps, a happier family than that of Sforza could rarely be found. One single cloud disturbed the serenity of the signora's days: it arose from the fate of Julia. Too soon did she find that her mother was indeed a prophetess; and galling was the chain which she was destined for life to drag; it was rendered doubly so by the reflection, that she had rushed upon her fate, and that her sufferings were solely occasioned by her own fault.

Very indifferent was the fate of Laura and Valeria; the many virtues of Laura, and her angelic temper, while they rendered her adored by her husband, made her a blessing also to her mother, her children, and her friends.

Nor was the union of Sforza and Valeria less happy; sometimes, indeed, the circumstances of her birth would throw a transient damp on the spirits of Valeria, but these slight sorrows, which were soon chased away by the tenderness of an adoring husband, were the only ones she ever knew after she became his. Blest with a lovely family, happy in each other, and gifted with the means which they liberally used of doing good to their fellow creatures; it was not possible for frail humanity to enjoy a felicity more complete than that of Sforza and his Valeria.

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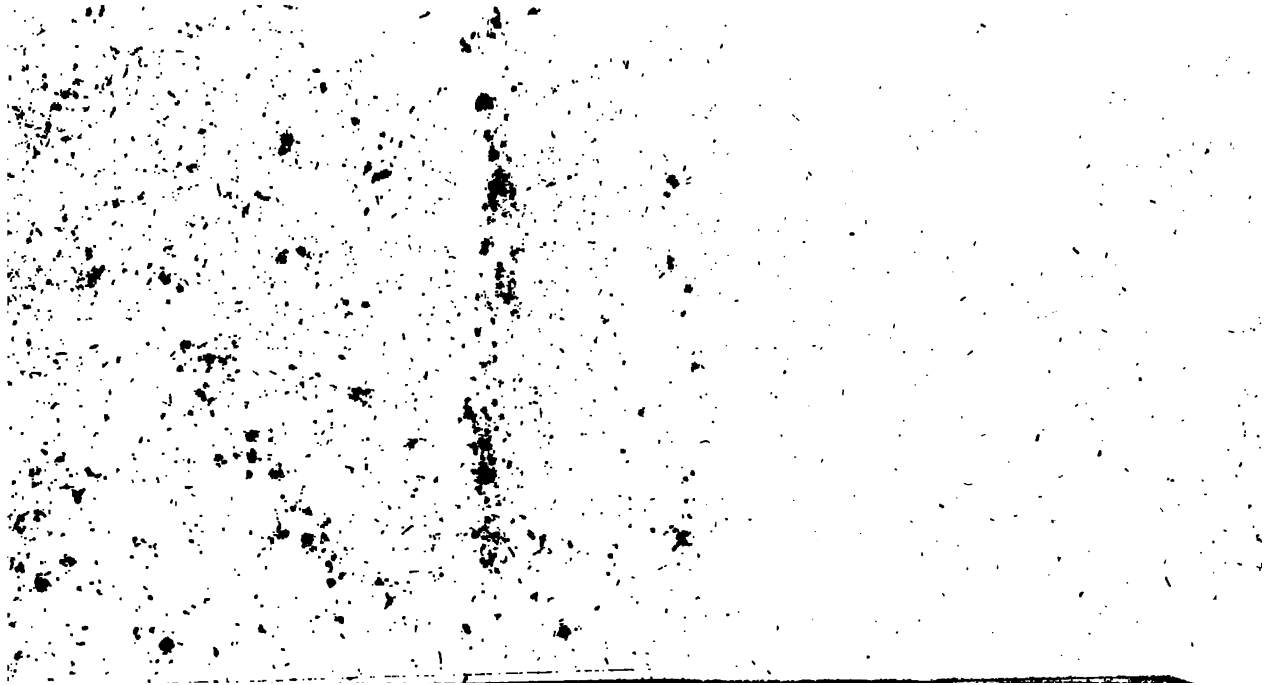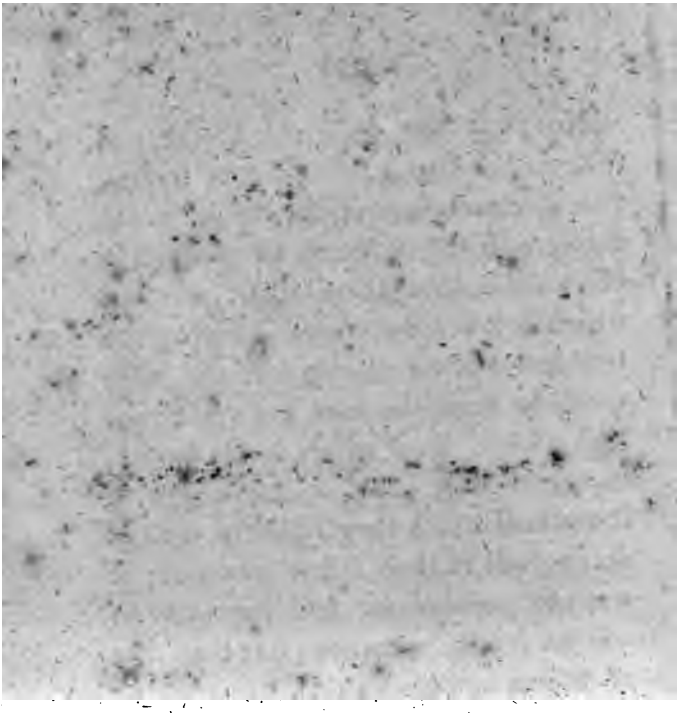
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